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Asian Indian Mothers' Involvement in Their Children's Schooling: An Analysis of Social and Cultural Capital

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Asian Indian Mothers' Involvement in Their Children's Schooling: An Analysis of Social
and Cultural Capital

by

Susan Chanderbhan-Forde

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Psychological and Social Foundations
College of Education
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culture, ethnic-specific capital

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Dedication

For my mother who sacrificed her life so that I could have opportunities she was never afforded. And who showed me what it means to never, ever, give up.

Shilling Love

Shailja Patel

They never said / they loved us

Those words were not / in any language / spoken by my parents

I love you honey was the dribbled caramel / of Hollywood movies / Dallas / Dynasty /
where hot water gushed / at the touch of gleaming taps / electricity surged / 24 hours a
day / through skyscrapers banquets obscene as the Pentagon / were mere backdrops /
where emotions had no consequences words / cost nothing meant nothing would never /
have to be redeemed

My parents / didn't speak / that / language

1975 / 15 Kenyan shillings to the British pound / my mother speaks battle

Storms the bastions of Nairobi's / most exclusive prep schools / shoots our cowering / six-
year old bodies like cannonballs / into the all-white classrooms / scales the ramparts of
class distinction / around Loreto Convent / where the president / sends his daughter / the

foreign diplomats send / their daughters / because my mother's daughters / will / have
world-class educations

She falls / regroupes / falls and re-groups / in endless assaults on visa officials / who sneer
behind their bulletproof windows / at US and British consulates / my mother the general /
arms her daughters / to take on every citadel

1977 / 20 Kenyan shillings to the British pound / my father speaks / stoic endurance / he
began at 16 the brutal apprenticeship / of a man who takes care of his own / relinquished
dreams of / fighter pilot rally driver for the daily crucifixion / of wringing profit from
business / my father the foot soldier, bound to an honour / deeper than any currency / *you
must / finish what you start you must / march until you drop you must / give your life for
those / you bring into the world*

I try to explain love / in shillings / to those who've never gauged / who gets to leave who
has to stay / who breaks free and what they pay / those who've never measured love / by
every rung of the ladder / from survival / to choice

50 Kenyan shillings to the pound / we cry from meltdown pressure / of exam after exam
where second place is never good enough / they snap / faces taut with fear / *you can't be
soft / you have to fight / or the world will eat you up*

75 Kenyan shillings to the pound / they hug us / tearless stoic at airports / as we board
planes for icy alien England / cram instructions into our pockets like talismans / *Eat
proper meals so you don't get sick / cover your ears against the cold / avoid those*

*muffathias / the students without purpose or values / learn and study / succeed / learn and
study / succeed / remember remember remember the cost of your life*

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Susan Chanderbhan-Forde

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study utilized concepts drawn from the theories advanced by Coleman (1988) and Pierre Bourdieu (1987) to examine the extent to which Asian Indian mothers utilize embodied cultural capital and social capital (specifically social norms and social networks) in their engagement in their children's education. Using interviews with 12 Asian Indian mothers whose children were enrolled in a large urban school district in West Central Florida, the study examined their beliefs about the value of education, the origin of those beliefs, their roles in their children's education, family and community norms surrounding education, and how they utilized social networks to assist them in negotiating the American public school system.

Several themes emerged from the interviews. Mothers' habitus included a view of education as critical to building a secure future for their children. They attributed their strong emphasis on education to personal experiences within their own families and particular historical and local conditions present within Indian society, including a history with colonialism, overpopulation, and a very competitive schooling system. Mothers' habitus also included playing an extremely active role in their children's educations, including extensive academic supplementing of the American curriculum. Academic supplementing was based on both their perceptions of a lack of rigor in the American

elementary school curriculum and their belief in the importance of continuous learning for children. How participants' habitus likely functioned as embodied capital in interaction with schools is discussed.

Participants reported that norms about education in the larger Asian Indian community included an emphasis on education as central priority in the lives of children as well as competitiveness around academics. They indicated that this competitiveness had both positive and negative effects on children. Partly due to their lack of knowledge about the American school system, mothers reported extensive use of co-ethnic social networks to access information that they used to help them support their children's educational success. They discussed how the composition of these networks limited their usefulness and how they sought knowledgeable outsiders to compensate for these weaknesses. Implications of the findings for researchers are discussed and suggestions for future research are offered.

Chapter One

Introduction

The population of the United States is becoming more and more diverse. At present, immigrants comprise over 12% of the U.S. population, about 35 million people (U.S. Census, 2000). About one in five children in the United States currently lives in an immigrant household (Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2002) and the parents of more than 15 million children in the U.S. are immigrants (Urban Institute, 2004). Historically, the largest number of immigrant families has been concentrated in six states (California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey New York, and Texas). However, recent U.S. Census data indicate that some midwestern and southern states (e.g., Idaho, Iowa, Georgia, and North Carolina,) are now outpacing those states in the number of resident immigrant families (Urban Institute, 2004). For instance, between 1990 and 2000 North Carolina and Iowa saw 270% and 182% increases, respectively, in their population of immigrant families (Urban Institute, 2004).

In large school districts, the percentage of immigrant families is often high. For instance, 48% of the children in the New York City public schools are from immigrant households (Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2002). The increasing diversity among America's school-aged population has meant new challenges for American scholars and educators as they attempt to understand families from a variety of immigrant groups and support the academic achievement of these children. For instance, the traditional Black-White achievement gap has become much more complicated with successive waves of

immigration by different groups to the U.S. Academic achievement data show the complicated nature of the differences among immigrant subgroups. For instance, Hispanic students (with the exception of those of Cuban descent) have higher dropout rates than do native born whites as well as lower levels of college degree attainment (Pew Hispanic Center, 2000). Asian American students, while often discussed as a model minority, (Prashad, 2000) have variations among subgroups. For instance, Southeast Asian students (e.g., Cambodian, Laotian, Hmong) have high dropout rates and low levels of postsecondary degree completion in comparison to native born White American students (College Board, 2008). In contrast, data for Chinese, Korean, and Asian Indian students show low numbers of high school dropouts and high levels of postsecondary degree completion in comparison to native born White Americans (College Board, 2008). Data indicate that while approximately 24% of Americans complete a Bachelor's degree or higher, approximately 64% of Asian Indians do.

These statistics reflect different schooling experiences for different immigrant subgroups, with some immigrant parents experiencing a realization of their hopes of educational success and upward mobility for their children while others watch their children experience school failure and downward assimilation in their host country. Educational researchers and sociologists who study the educational experiences of minority groups in American society have examined how various theories account for the different educational experiences of various groups in society, including immigrant subgroups. These explanations include genetic factors (e.g., Hernstein & Murray, 1994), oppositional identities (e.g., Ogbu, 1974; 2003) and segmented assimilation (Portes &

Zhou, 1993). Two explanations advanced relate to the idea of how intangible forms of *capital* can be leveraged in order to support children's educational achievement.

The economist Glen Loury (1977) is often credited with being one of the earliest social science thinkers to introduce the idea of *social capital*, that social relationships, like physical capital, can be translated into something of value that is tangible. The idea that parents possess varying degrees of capital and that it can be leveraged to influence the academic success of their children was advanced by James Coleman (1988), one of the most influential proponents of the idea of social capital. He argued that social capital is a form of capital that exists in the relationships between people. An individual's ties to other people allow him or her to gain access to a broad range of resources. Coleman (1988) focused on three specific forms of social capital and discussed them in terms of how parents could use each form to engage in their children's education and to promote their educational success. The first form of social capital Coleman discussed was *obligations and expectations*, that is when favors and obligations are traded between people. Coleman suggested that this requires groups where there is a high degree of trustworthiness between individuals. With regard to education, an example of this would be trading favors with other parents such as babysitting or picking up students from school. The second form of social capital Coleman discussed was *information channels*. He noted that information is costly to acquire as it requires time and attention, but that social networks contain the potential to gain information. Information gained from social networks can then be used to facilitate action. An example of this in the educational arena would be parents exchanging information about the best schools in a city or the best teachers in a particular school.

Finally, Coleman discussed *social norms* as a form of social capital that can reward behaviors like academic achievement and that are more effectively maintained in social networks characterized by a high degree of closure (everyone knows everyone) or intergenerational closure. Coleman (1988) described intergenerational closure as “...the parents’ friends are the parents of their children’s friends” (106).

Analyses that have used data from large scale studies, particularly the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS), have found that social capital (operationalized using Coleman’s ideas) impacts outcomes like academic math achievement (Santos, 2002) and college attendance (Mullis, Rathge, & Mullis, 2003). However, some authors (e.g., Portes, 2000) have criticized Coleman’s work for its uncritical discussion of capital, which does not consider societal influences on what is defined as capital and who can obtain it. They argue that this omission means that research using Coleman’s concepts has the potential to contribute to discourses that ignore the historical and societal oppression of some groups and the privileging of other groups.

This omission is addressed by the work of French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu (1987) who as part of his larger theory of social action described forms of capital that individuals possess. Given that Bourdieu’s work was partly intended to, “...capture human interaction and the sources of power in these interactions which perpetuate systems of domination and subordination” (Horvat, 2003, p. 5), his ideas more critically examine the nature of capital. Bourdieu, whose work predated Coleman’s, argued that people possess varying amounts of capital and that this capital is influential in the educational process. Like Coleman, Bourdieu (1986), discussed social capital. He

defined social capital as social relationships that yield benefits for children's education and socialization and argued that parents can access this capital to benefit their children.

More significantly, Bourdieu (1986) also introduced the concept of *cultural capital*. He argued that people possess this capital to varying degrees and that it shapes parents' engagement in the education of their children. Bourdieu discussed three forms of cultural capital: *objectified capital*, *institutionalized capital*, and *embodied capital*.

Objectified cultural capital consists of cultural goods like books and dictionaries.

Institutionalized cultural capital consists of educational credentials and degrees.

Embodied cultural capital is explained through the mechanism of *habitus*. Habitus can be understood as the dispositions, attitudes, values, and behaviors that parents possess.

When a parent's habitus is aligned with what is valued by the institution with which he or she is interacting (e.g, a school) and when that habitus assists parents in navigating that system to obtain their desired goals, it becomes embodied cultural capital (Horvath, 2003). Bourdieu (1987) contended that the three forms of capital he described explain the differences in educational experiences between groups of children. He said:

The notion of cultural capital...is a theoretical hypothesis which made it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes by relating academic success, the specific profits which children from the different classes and class fractions can obtain in the academic market, to the distribution of cultural capital between the classes and class fractions. (p. 47)

Furthermore, Bourdieu criticized the explanations of differences in academic achievement between groups advanced by his contemporaries and argued that:

They neglect to relate scholastic investment strategies to the whole set of educational strategies and to the system of reproduction strategies, they inevitably, by a necessary paradox, let slip the best hidden and socially most determinant educational investment, namely, the domestic transmission of cultural capital. Their studies of the relationship between academic ability and academic investment show that they are unaware that ability or talent is itself the product of an investment of time and cultural capital...scholastic yield from educational action depends on the cultural capital previously invested by the family (p. 48).

Although Bourdieu focused on class as the mechanism that shapes habitus, his ideas can be extended to families from different cultural backgrounds. In fact, more recent research has focused on how the conditions shaping the lives of disadvantaged populations result in them bringing different levels of cultural capital to bear on their interactions with societal institutions. As McNamara Horvat (2003) notes, habitus is, "...shaped by the objective conditions of lived existence...the habitus is generated by the social conditions of lived experience including race, ethnicity, geographical location, and gender (p.2). Further, in the U.S. a small number of researchers (e.g., Lareau and McNamara Horvat, 1999) have extended Bourdieu's ideas about cultural capital to examine how social conditions that shape lived experience, like race, impacts interactions with educational institutions. In England, Crozier (2008) has examined how immigrant parents' approach was characterized very differently by parents and the school. Thus, for the purposes of this study it is argued that ethnicity and immigration status, shaped by larger social and historical forces in the home country as well as local conditions in the

destination country interact with the particular conditions of lived experience to shape the habitus of immigrant families.

Bourdieu discussed embodied cultural capital as being transmitted through habitus, the body of tacit knowledge and assumptions that individuals possess.

Depending on what knowledge is valued by a particular institutional context (e.g., schools), habitus can be valued embodied cultural capital (Grenfell & James, 1998).

Bourdieu was also explicit in arguing that cultural capital is transmitted in families. He stated:

...the initial accumulation of cultural capital, the precondition for the fast, easy accumulation of every kind of useful cultural capital, starts at the outset, without delay, without wasted time, only for the offspring of families endowed with strong cultural capital (p. 49).

A limited body of research has examined Coleman and Bourdieu's ideas about social and cultural capital using qualitative methods. Horvath & Lareau (2003), for instance, found that middle class, poor, and working class American parents differed in their beliefs about schools and their approach to schooling. In the case of middle class parents, their belief that the school experience was one that could be customized to fit their children's needs, constituted a kind of cultural capital that impacted the kind of school experience they were able to secure for their children.

With regard to immigrant parents, researchers have found evidence that immigrant parents access forms of social capital, specifically social norms and social networks, in supporting their children's education. Zhou & Bankston (1998), in their ethnography of Vietnamese families in New Orleans, point out that, "particular patterns

of social relations embedded in the ethnic community can serve as sources of social capital...” (p. 20). Bankston (2004), based on his and Zhou’s research with the Vietnamese community in New Orleans argues that high achievement in this group was maintained by,

....cultural values that are conducive to achievement and by bounded social networks that maintain these values...respect for elders, cooperation, and acceptance of authority are not simply acknowledged but are practiced as a result of the mesh of ethnic social relations surrounding children of Vietnamese descent in the United States (p. 177).

In addition to tightly bound social networks present in the Vietnamese community that maintained social norms conducive to academic achievement, Zhou & Bankston (1998) also found that the community’s social networks were important in supporting academic achievement. For instance, Vietnamese community associations provided after-school assistance in academic subjects to Vietnamese students.

Zhou and Bankston’s (1998) work and Horvath and Lareau’s (2003) ethnographic work are exceptions in the literature on social capital and cultural capital. Overall, studies relating to social capital have tended to use large data sets. This has resulted in researchers operationalizing social capital in ways that do not allow them to gain an in-depth understanding of the nature of concepts like intergenerational closure, parental networks, and parent-child discussions (Santos, 2002; Kao, 2004).

Furthermore, very little research conducted in the U.S. has used Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital to examine how parents engage with their children’s schooling. The few qualitative studies (Horvath & Lareau, 2003) that have illuminated

the way in which cultural capital functions to impact home-school relationships have not examined the experiences of immigrant groups in the U.S. In particular, the educational experiences of Asian Indian students and their families in the U.S. remain largely unexplored. The present study seeks to examine how mothers from a specific immigrant group (Asian Indians) engage in their children's education and to what extent they draw on various forms of social and cultural capital to do so. Forms of capital to be examined in this study are drawn from the work of both Coleman (1988) and Bourdieu (1987). These forms are embodied cultural capital, social norms, and social networks. The study promises to provide an in-depth examination of the nature of the forms of capital that a little-studied immigrant community, Asian Indian families, draw upon to support their children's education. In doing so, this study has the potential to increase our understanding of the important topic of the educational experiences of immigrant families.

The Indian Cultural Context

India, located in southern Asia, on the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal is a vast country, containing a variety of religious and cultural traditions. A history of conquest by Persian or Mughal invaders and colonization by the British has meant that Hindi, Urdu, and English are spoken widely as are a variety languages native to local areas and states, (e.g., Tamil). (Isaksen Leonard, 1997)

With regard to religion, India is the birthplace of both Hinduism and Buddhism. Today, approximately 80% of Indians are Hindu. However, India has the second-largest population of Muslims of any country in the world as well as large numbers of Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians, and small numbers of Jews.

Caste is an important organizing principle of society for the Hindu majority of the Indian population and to a lesser extent for Muslims. According to Bhattacharya & Schopeley (2004),

Traditionally, each caste is associated with a fixed and inherited occupation. The Hindu caste system in India has four orders, with *Brahmin* (priests) at the top of the hierarchy, followed by *Kshatriya* (warriors), *Vyasha* (common people), and *Sudra* (untouchables) at the bottom (p. 85).

Caste is fixed at birth, setting serious limits on social mobility, and cannot be changed. However, socioeconomic status, which is separate from caste, can be changed. In India, education has often been the method used to do so. Bhattacharya & Schopeley (2004) note that it is important to understand that in Indian society, education is valued partly because education and English literacy were important tools in India's struggle for independence. In addition, national and state governments heavily emphasized education post-independence as a way to modernize and improve India.

Bhattacharya & Schopeley (2004) also note that the self-concept is positioned within the family system in Indian culture. Thus they say,

Within the hierarchical structure of Asian families, success is not understood in individualistic terms, but rather as a matter of enhancing family pride and honor. Parents openly express their expectations of their children, including academic achievement, in terms of fulfilling family obligations and enhancing family pride and prestige (p. 85).

In contrast to American society, which tends to place the needs and desires of the individual first, the authors assert that obligation to family is a foundational value of Indian society, regardless of class and caste. Furthermore, the authors argue that, in examining parental expectations and children's compliance with these expectations among Indian families, it is important to understand that concepts from the Hindu religion play a role in creating expectations.

They explain,

Dharma refers to rules that depict virtuous and appropriate behavior. The duty of parents to care for their children is based on the belief that God has entrusted the parents with the care of those children; the reciprocal duty and honor due to parents from children arises from the belief that the parents are acting as God's earthly representatives. *Karma* illustrates the reciprocal nature of fate and states that one's behavior in past incarnations as well as in the present life will determine future events and fate not only in the present lifetime but in future incarnations as well. *Karma* thus serves to reward those who fulfill the obligations of *dharma* and punish those who do not (p. 85).

For most of the 20th century, India has been characterized as a Third World country, struggling to cope with overpopulation, high rates of infant mortality, and low literacy rates. India continues to struggle with human development; in fact, it is number 134 out of 182 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index which measures factors such as the rates of life expectancy, infant mortality rates, and literacy in a country (Human Development Report, 2009). However, in recent years, India has

come to be known as one of the world's most successful emerging economies. It has made economic gains thanks to globalization, leveraging large numbers of highly educated English-speaking workers to make itself a destination for outsourced work from the U.S. (Friedman, 2006). It has also benefited from an educated, young, and technologically-savvy entrepreneurial class that has helped move the Indian economy beyond outsourcing to creating innovative domestic companies.

Some attribute this development partly to the Indian government's prescient investment in the creation of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs). These are postsecondary institutions, created in newly independent India, that focus on developing a skilled workforce in the areas of science and engineering. Ironically, it is these same IITs that have helped to give a large number of young Indians the skills they need to emigrate successfully to the U.S., taking with them the skills and knowledge developed at the government-funded IITs (Friedman, 2006).

Asian Indian Immigration to the U.S.

Historically, Asian Indians have been immigrating to the U.S. since 1899 (Isaksen Leonard, 1997). The first wave of Asian Indian immigration involved Sikh laborers who immigrated to California during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The major factor that contributed to the second and largest wave of Indian immigration, which began post-1965, was changes in U.S. immigration law. Partly due to the effects of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and the need for skilled labor in the American economy, there were revisions to the 1965 U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Act which eliminated limits on immigrants based on country of origin and gave preference to educated immigrants. For their part, large numbers of Indians desired to immigrate to the U.S. for the financial

opportunities it provided (Friedman, 2006). This led to the immigration of large numbers of Asian Indians and this continues today.

According to the 2000 Census, Indians make up about 2% of the total U.S. population and 15% of the Asian American population. However, Asian Indian immigration has increased by 106% since the 1990 Census, making India the second largest source of legal migrants to the U.S. Currently, the population of Asian Indians in the US. is approximately 1.7 million (U.S. Census, 2000).

The 2000 U.S. Census provides a profile of Asian Indian immigrants to the U.S. as a group that is proficient in English and highly educated. The majority of Asian Indians who immigrate to the U.S. do so with a Bachelors degree or higher (U.S. Census, 2000).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the role Asian Indian parents played in their children's schooling, and in particular the extent to which they accessed various forms of social and cultural capital to engage in their children's education and promote their educational success. The findings of this study will contribute to the literature on immigrant parents, Asian Indian parents and schooling, social and cultural capital, and immigrant parents.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do Asian Indian mothers access different forms of social and cultural capital to engage in their children's education? To answer this central question the following areas will be examined.

- a. What role does embodied cultural capital play in Asian Indian mothers' engagement in their children's education?
- b. What role do social norms play in Asian Indian mothers' engagement in their children's education?
- c. What role do social networks play in Asian Indian mothers' engagement in their children's education?

This study employed a qualitative research methodology. The researcher utilized a semi-structured interview with 12 Asian Indian mothers about how they engaged in their children's schooling process. The theoretical framework guiding the study were conceptions of social and cultural capital articulated by Coleman (1988) and Bourdieu (1987). Mothers' engagement with their children's schooling was examined in order to understand how mothers utilized social capital and cultural capital to participate in their children's educations and to contribute to their academic success.

Significance of Study

Although exploratory in nature, this study has the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the field of education. In the coming years, American schools face the task of educating increasing numbers of foreign-born students. Data on academic achievement paint a picture of vastly different outcomes for different subgroups of immigrant students, with some groups experiencing alienation and unrealized hopes and others experiencing fulfillment of their dreams for their children in the new country. Different explanations have been advanced to explain these differences. Explanations that focus on the forms of capital parents bring to bear on their children's education have not been explored in depth in the U.S., particularly using immigrant populations. Thus,

the findings of this study have the potential to increase our understanding of immigrant families and education.

Definition of Terms

Asian Indian/Indian. This term generally includes anyone born in the country of India. It is important to note that this population is religiously diverse and includes Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, and Jews.

Theoretical Concepts

As previously noted, Coleman (1988) discussed the role of social norms in the formation of social capital. Both Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) discussed the importance of social networks. Bourdieu alone discussed the notion of cultural capital, one form of which is embodied capital. This study focused on social capital (norms and social networks) and cultural capital, specifically the embodied form of cultural capital. The researcher reviewed the writings of Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) and prior research studies (e.g., Lew, 2007; Mullis, Rathge, & Mullis, 2003; Zhou & Bankston, 1998) to delineate the concepts of social capital and cultural capital for the purposes of this study.

Social Capital.

According to Coleman (1988), social capital is derived from social interactions, taking multiple forms, and facilitating certain actions. He described three forms of social capital, (1) obligations and expectations, (2) information channels, and (3) social norms, and noted that these forms can all influence children's academic achievement. For the purposes of this study, social capital was divided into two areas, social norms and social networks. Coleman (1988) noted that '...social relations...constitute a form of social

capital that provides information that facilitates action.” (p. 102). Later research (e.g., Lew, 2007) has examined how parents leverage social networks to gain educational information that they utilized to engage in their children’s education. Thus, social networks, with a particular focus on ethnic social networks, were defined as parents’ social contacts from which they accessed information to engage in their children’s education.

Coleman (1988) alone discussed social norms noting that they “facilitate and constrain actions (p. 105). He also noted that in social networks with a high degree of closure, or intergenerational closure in the case of parents and children, norms are more effectively communicated and supported. Thus, in families where parents know the parents of their children’s peers and parents share the same norms, these norms are more effectively communicated and maintained than in social networks where parents have little contacts with the parents of their children’s peers. Thus this study examined the norms or “shoulds” present around education in the families interviewed for the study and how intergenerational closure supported these norms. Given that prior research (e.g., Lew, 2007; Zhou & Bankston, 1998) found that norms present in ethnic communities played an important role in supporting children’s academic achievement, norms present in the larger Asian Indian community regarding educational achievement were also examined.

Cultural Capital

Bourdieu discussed cultural capital as a kind of social currency which confers power and whose value is set by the dominant groups in society. He discussed three

forms of cultural capital: embodied capital, objectified cultural capital, and institutionalized cultural capital. This study focused only on embodied cultural capital.

Embodied cultural capital. Bourdieu noted that embodied cultural capital "takes the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body" (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 47). It is important to understand that, ultimately, embodied cultural capital is what is valued by the institutions (e.g., schools) with which a person interacts; it is what enables parents to successfully navigate a particular institution to obtain desired goals.

Habitus. Bourdieu used the mechanism of *habitus* to explain the concept of cultural capital, arguing that embodied cultural capital is "converted into an integral part of the person, into a habitus." (p. 48). Grenfell and James describe habitus as, "social inheritance" and note that it, "...implies habit or unthinking-ness in actions and dispositions...to act in a certain way, to grasp experience in a certain way, to think in a certain way" (p. 14-15). For the purposes of this study, participants' embodied cultural capital, or habitus regarding education, was explicated through examination of their beliefs about the value of education, their beliefs about their role in their children's education, the origins of these beliefs, and how they interacted with schools.

Delimitations of Study

This study was limited to Asian Indian mothers residing in the State of Florida whose children attended a large urban school district in West Central Florida. The 2000 Census data note that approximately 2 million Asian Indians resided in the U.S. and 104,715 Asian Indians resided in Florida (U.S. Census, 2000). Approximately, 6,500 Asian Indians lived in the county of residence of the participants in the study, about 30% of the total Asian population in the county (U.S. Census, 2000). Since the study population was

limited to the State of Florida, this study may not have captured aspects of the experiences of Asian Indian families who reside in other states in the U.S.

The sample used in the study was small in number and limited to a specific city in the State of Florida. Thus, the sample may not have represented the range of experiences of Asian Indian families residing elsewhere in the U.S. In addition, a sample of this size may not have captured the social diversity of the Asian Indian population in the U.S, or even in Florida. Since the sample was primarily recruited through community informants, they may not have been representative of the Asian Indian community in terms of income, education level, and acculturation. In addition, those who volunteered for the study may have differed in their beliefs and experiences from those who did not volunteer.

Limitations of Study

A principal limitation of the study is that, due to social desirability, participants may not have been forthcoming about their engagement in their children's schooling process and may have tried to cast themselves in a favorable light by speaking very positively about their beliefs and their engagement in their children's schooling.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

This review examines the literature relating to social and cultural capital and immigrant parents. Research on social and cultural capital is discussed in terms of how the concepts have been defined in different research studies and/or what effect researchers have found with regard to their association with academic outcomes such as grades, scores on standardized tests, enrollment in four-year colleges, and bachelor's degree attainment as well as outcomes such as the parent-school relationship and parents' ability to obtain desired educational benefits for their children. The review is divided into three sections: (a) a brief overview of the concepts of social and cultural capital, (b) research examining social and cultural capital and non-immigrant parents, and (c) research examining social and cultural capital and immigrant parents. Given the paucity of research on Asian Indian parents, research involving this group is integrated into the discussion of immigrant parents.

Social and Cultural Capital: Overview

Social Capital

Coleman defined social capital as a resource that exists in the relationships between people that allows them to gain access to resources. Coleman (1988) focused on three specific forms of social capital and discussed them in terms of how parents use these forms of capital to engage in their children's education and promote their educational success. The three forms of social capital he discussed were: (1) obligations

and expectations, that is trading favors with other parents such as babysitting each others children or picking up students from school), (2) information channels, exchanging information with other parents about schools or education, and (3) social norms, which serve to reward and sanction certain behaviors, like academic achievement. Further, Coleman argued that norms are much more effectively maintained when there is a high degree of intergenerational closure, that is, children are a part of peer networks and are exposed to adults who share the same values as their parents. Kao (2004) gives the example of parents who restrict children's peer network to co-ethnics who share a similar orientation towards achievement to illustrate Coleman's idea about intergenerational closure.

Coleman contended that social capital is derived from two types of relationships, parents' relationships with their children and parents' relationship with other adults, particularly the adults associated with the school their child attends (Coleman, 1988). The concept received a great deal of attention and was the subject of a flurry of research after the publication of Coleman's 1988 article. Since then, a number of studies have examined the impact of social capital on academic achievement when it is leveraged by parents engaging in their children's education (e.g., Carbone, 1998). Most of these studies have used a quantitative approach, utilizing large data sets (e.g., National Educational Longitudinal Survey) and have focused mostly only on the role of social norms and social networks, largely excluding Coleman's ideas about obligations and/or expectations. Researchers have tended to focus on intergenerational closure, that is to what extent parents know and interact with the parents of their children's friends (e.g.,

Mullis, Rathge, & Mullis, 2003), while others have focused on parent-child communication (e.g., Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Perna and Titus (2005) note that “Coleman’s...approach... stresses the role of social capital in communicating the norms, trust, authority, and social controls that an individual must understand and adopt in order to succeed...” and that Coleman focuses on identifying “ways in which parental involvement can build social capital”. (p. 488).

More recent work by Lin (e.g., 2001) has focused on the social networks aspect of both Coleman’s and Bourdieu’s work. Lin points out that, with regard to social capital, the commonality between Coleman and Bourdieu is that both of them believed that, “...“social capital consists of resources embedded in social relations and social structures, which can be mobilized when an actor wishes to increase the likelihood of success in a purposive action” (Lin, 2001, p. 24). Lin focuses on how social networks can be used to access resources. While Coleman argued that closed networks were important for ensuring compliance with social norms conducive to academic achievement, Lin argues that weak network ties can be positive if parents and students go outside of their networks to access networks that possess valuable information, for instance information about navigating the educational process.

Those who study the adaptation and adjustment of immigrant children have expanded on the concept of social capital in some important ways. One might expect, as Kao (2004) notes, that immigrant parents would have lower levels of social capital because they are outsiders in a foreign country and have fewer individuals in their social networks from whom to gain information and also fewer individuals to help enforce parental norms. However, she asserts that it is equally possible that, “...among other

same-ethnic immigrants, the intensity of the obligation and the expectations for reciprocity should be greater, given the shared experience of migration and the sentimental attachment to one's country of origin" (Kao, 2004, p. 172).

Indeed, researchers have found support for Coleman's (1988) ideas about intergenerational closure and the value of social networks in the stories of educational success in some immigrant communities. Specifically, they (Zhou & Bankston, 1988) argue that these communities are able to draw on *ethnic-specific* social capital in supporting their children's educational achievement. For instance, Zhou & Bankston's (1998) study of a poor Vietnamese community in New Orleans found that despite low levels of education and lack of familiarity with the American school system, Vietnamese students succeeded in school, largely because of the ethnic-specific social capital that they drew upon in their communities. With regard to social norms, dense networks of co-ethnics residing together reinforced beliefs and values that supported academic achievement. Social networks also played a role in the educational success of the children in the study because parents developed resources (e.g., after-school academic programs) that supported the academic success of their children.

Alejandro Portes (2003), a leading researcher in the area of the acculturation of immigrant youth, notes that adaptation of the immigrant second generation is facilitated by human capital that immigrant families possess, for instance the capital to reinforce parental norms and access information about challenges and opportunities in their children's lives. Portes (2003) also supports Zhou & Bankston's (1998) argument about the existence of ethnic-specific social capital and that this can contribute to the well-being of immigrants. He asserts that, "Social capital, grounded on ethnic networks,

provides a key resource in confronting obstacles to successful adaptation” and that, “Strong ethnic communities commonly enforce norms against divorce and marital disruption, thus helping preserve intact families” (p. 49). Portes (2003) also argues that this is a form of social capital that even immigrant communities that are poor have access to because it depends on how strong community members sense of obligation is to each other, not how much material wealth they possess. Portes notes that if individuals in an ethnic community are professional and wealthy but feel no sense of obligation towards each other, it benefits no one. Instead, he argues that ethnic-specific social capital “...depends less on the relative economic or occupational success of immigrants than on the *density* [sic] of ties among them.” (p. 49).

However, Portes (2000, 2003) cautions researchers that it is important to examine immigrants’ context of reception as this impacts the ability of immigrant communities to form ethnic-specific social capital. For instance, Portes asserts that Mexican Americans as a group tend to face an unwelcoming context characterized by uncertainty over legal status, discrimination, and fear from natives about lost jobs. This vastly decreases their ability to form the tight social networks that contribute to the educational success of their children as the Vietnamese community in Zhou & Bankston’s (1998) study was able to do.

Cultural Capital

The concept of social capital as discussed by Coleman (1988) has been criticized by some, including Portes (2000). He argued that a weakness of Coleman’s discussion of social capital is that it uncritically accepted social capital as equally available to all groups. In contrast, Portes (1998) and others note that Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) notion of

cultural capital is explicitly concerned with power and relations of domination and subordination. Bourdieu posits that capital becomes capital only because it is legitimized by the dominant groups in a society (Grenfell & James, 1998). Bourdieu discussed three forms of cultural capital, *objectified*, *embodied*, and *institutionalized*. Objectified cultural capital rests in material objects (e.g., books, dictionaries, computers). Institutionalized capital refers to educational qualifications and credentials. However, the present study focused on *embodied cultural capital*. Embodied cultural capital is explained by Bourdieu through the concept of *habitus*. Horvath (2003) notes that "...habitus encompasses the universe of experiences and background characteristics of particular individuals" (p. 7). Grenfell & James (1998) describe habitus as, "social inheritance" and note that it, "...implies habit or unthinking-ness in actions and dispositions...to act in a certain way, to grasp experience in a certain way, to think in a certain way" (p. 14-15). When individuals' habitus meshes closely with the culture of an institution, for instance schools, the individuals are better able to navigate that institution to attain the goals to which they aspire. Bourdieu asserted that upper class parents' dispositions, behaviors, and beliefs align more closely with the culture of schools and this results in a form of capital that they are able to use in interaction with schools to support their children's academic success. Although some research (e.g., Lew, 2007) has examined how immigrant parents access forms of social capital to engage in their children's education, very little research has examined immigrant parents' engagement in their children's schooling using the concept of cultural capital.

Current Study

Coleman's conceptual articulation of social capital has stimulated a great deal of educational research. While there has been far less empirical examination of Bourdieu's articulation of embodied cultural capital, his ideas address some important limitations in Coleman's work (Portes, 2003). Prior research indicates that Coleman's ideas about social norms and social networks and Bourdieu's ideas about embodied cultural capital are important analytical tools in understanding how parents engage in their children's education. Bankston & Zhou's (1998) work indicates that this is also the case for immigrant parents, with the addition that immigrant communities possess ethnic-specific forms of social capital that parents access in order to support their children's academic success. As such, this study examined the nature of forms of social capital discussed by both Coleman and Bourdieu, specifically social norms and social networks. In addition, the study examined Bourdieu's concept of embodied cultural capital. As previously noted, following Coleman (1988), social norms were defined as "shoulds" concerning education that existed in the families interviewed for the study as well as the larger Asian Indian community. Social networks were defined as mothers' social contacts, particularly contacts from the ethnic community, from which they accessed information to engage in their children's education. Finally, mothers' embodied cultural capital was examined by analyzing their habitus in the area of education, specifically their beliefs about the value of education, their beliefs about their role in their children's education, the origins of these beliefs, and how they interacted with schools.

Social and Cultural Capital and Non-Immigrant Parents

Dika & Singh (2002) in their review of research on the concept of social capital in education research point out that most research in education has tended to use “Colemanesque” approaches to understanding social capital and a much smaller number have used Bourdieu’s ideas about cultural capital. Quantitative studies on social capital have tended to use regression-based analyses and to some extent HLM methods. Studies have also tended to use data from large scale studies, particularly the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS), a large-scale panel study that collected data from a nationally representative sample of eighth grade American students on a variety of topics including school and home experiences. These studies have explicated social capital in a variety of ways but have usually focused on Coleman’s concept of social norms, reducing it to intergenerational closure and then operationalizing this concept as parent-child discussions. Overall, only a small number of studies have used qualitative designs to examine the concepts of social capital (Dika & Singh, 2002).

As previously noted, researchers have operationalized Coleman’s ideas in a variety of ways in conducting research with parents. Mullis, Rathge & Mullis (2003) used NELS data to study the effect of social capital on the academic performance of 24, 599 Black, White, and Hispanic middle school students. The authors operationalized social capital using three variables: resource capital, parental networks, and student networks. The resource capital variable was defined as parental income, parental education, and access to educational resources in the home including a place to study. The parental networks variable was measured by whether or not parents knew the parents of their children’s friends, and if they were involved in any parent-teacher organizations.

The student networks variable was measured based on students' involvement in school-based extracurricular activities (e.g., science fair) and non school-based activities (e.g., youth groups). Of the measures used, the authors found that resource capital was most predictive of educational achievement. The authors also found a strong correlation between parental networks and resource capital, which led them to suggest that parents with higher SES have more of an advantage in creating social networks.

Lee & Bowen (2006) examined the involvement of parents from different social class backgrounds and ethnicities using a sample of 415 fifth graders in the Midwest. They used Bourdieu's theory as a framework, specifically his idea that families from different social classes possess different amounts of cultural capital to examine whether types of parental involvement differed depending on the social class background as well as the ethnic background of parents. They also examined whether the impact of types of parental involvement on academic achievement varied according to ethnicity and social class background. The four types of parent involvement examined were: discussing educational topics with parents, helping with homework, managing children's time spent on literacy and non-literacy activities, and parents' educational beliefs and expectations for their children. Students' academic achievement was measured by teacher report of grades. The researchers found that school-based involvement had a positive effect on academic achievement. Low achievement was associated with high expectations. However, the researchers also found that types of parental involvement varied by ethnic group and socioeconomic status. For instance, middle and high SES White families had higher levels of school-based involvement than low SES White families and the other groups in the study. With the exception of monitoring children's time, a type of

involvement more frequently reported by African American and Hispanic parents, groups in the study were similar on the types of parent involvement examined. As for differences in the impact of types of parent involvement between groups, parent-child discussions had positive effects on achievement for European American children but not Hispanic children. Since the study did not assess the *quality* of the parent-child discussions, it is possible that parent-child discussion in European American homes differed significantly from those in Hispanic homes.

Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau (2003) in their qualitative work, found that middle, poor, and working class families have different amounts of both social and cultural capital and this impacts how they navigate the home-school relationship. Using a qualitative design, the authors used Bourdieu's ideas about cultural capital and habitus to examine how middle class and working class parents differ in the strategies they use to deal with problems at school using a sample of 88 third and fourth graders and their families in the Midwest. They found that parental social networks for families of all class backgrounds were shaped by children's participation in out of school activities; that is, parents knew the parents of their children's classmates through their children's participation in out of school activities. Middle class parents, probably due to their children's participation in a greater number of out of school activities, had larger social networks; they were acquainted with a greater number of their children's classmates. Middle class parents' social networks were also more likely to include various kinds of professionals, including education professionals such as teachers. In contrast, working class and poor parents' social networks were characterized by kinship ties; most of the parents they knew were family members. The differing composition of these social

networks ultimately shaped how parents from different class backgrounds approached issues with their children's schools.

The authors also found that when faced with two types of problems (inappropriate behavior on the part of a teacher and disagreements with educational placement decisions made by the school), middle class, working class, and poor parents dealt with the problems in different ways. Faced with the issue of inappropriate behavior on the part of a teacher, middle class parents accessed their social networks to confront the school as a group, resulting in disciplinary sanctions for teachers who exhibited inappropriate behavior. In contrast, poor and working class parents confronted incidents of inappropriate teacher behaviors individually and not collectively, which resolved the problem but did not result in disciplinary action against teachers involved.

The researchers also found that middle class parents accessed their social networks to "customize" their children's school careers. For instance, when middle class parents disagreed with special education placement decisions, particularly gifted or learning disability placements, they utilized the professionals in their social networks to access knowledge that allowed them to contest the schools' judgments. In contrast, faced with placement decisions that they did not agree with, poor and working class parents responded by simply accepting the school's decisions.

Perna & Titus (2005), integrated aspects of Coleman's (1988) and Bourdieu's (1986) ideas about social capital and Lin's (2001) operationalization of social capital as social networks to examine the relationship between parental involvement and college enrollment. The researchers used a hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) design to examine NELS data on a cohort of 9,810 students when they were in the eight grade,

sophomores in high school, seniors in high school, and two years after high school graduation. They used parent involvement to measure social capital. Parent involvement was measured using Coleman's ideas that social capital is derived from the parent-student relationship and the parent-school relationship. The parent-student relationship was examined by measuring parent-student discussions about education-related issues (e.g., the SATs, topics studied in school, grades) and parental monitoring (e.g., family rules about maintaining a minimum grade point average, completing homework, and attending school regularly, etc.). Parent-school involvement was measured by examining parents' contact with schools (e.g., extent to which parents contacted the school regarding students' academic progress or behavior and attendance), parents' knowledge of students' progress toward high school graduation, and how often parents contacted the school to volunteer).

Parents contact with other parents was assessed by measuring the number of students' friends' parents with whom parents reported contact. The study also examined school-level variables including how much the school encouraged parental involvement (measured by an administrator survey), resources that could be accessed through social networks at the school (how many parents volunteered in classrooms, parent education and income for the school as a whole, and the average of the student-level measures of parent involvement), and the extent to which weak ties might provide access to otherwise unavailable resources (measured by the standard deviation of family income at the school and the percentage of African American and Hispanic students at the school). The outcome variable used in the study was enrollment in a two-year or four year college.

Perna & Titus (2005) found support for Coleman's ideas about parent involvement as a form of social capital that promoted positive academic outcomes. They found that parent-student discussion about educational issues, parent contact with the school regarding volunteering and academic issues were related to the odds of enrolling in a two or four-year college, even after accounting for income, parent education, gender, and race/ethnicity. There was also a close correspondence between students' and their friends' post-secondary plans and students' actual enrollment.

The authors also found that college enrollment was positively related to average family income at the school a student attended but also to average parental education and average parental education expectations of all the parents in a school. In addition, Perna & Titus' (2005) work found support for Bourdieu's ideas about social capital varying across different groups. In this case, they found that some groups were less successful than others at converting the social capital they possessed into a form that was useful for the goal of enrolling in a four-year college. While African American parents were successful, "at converting into college enrollment parental involvement in the form of parent-school contact about academics... they were less effective at converting into college enrollment parental involvement in the form of parent-student discussions about education issues." (Perna & Titus, 2005, p. 508). It's possible that the content of the discussions differed in African American homes.

More recent work also using NELS data has found that social capital predicts college attendance. Meier, Sandefur, & Campbell (2006) operationalized social capital as family structure (whether the child lived with two biological parents, one biological parent, etc.), parental expectations about college attendance, parent-child discussion of

school activities, parent involvement in school, parent-school communication about academic matters, and intergenerational closure (whether parents knew the parents of their children's friends), and Catholic school attendance. Catholic school attendance was included as a measure of social capital because Coleman and others have suggested that Catholic schools constitute a closed community of parents, teachers, and administrators who share the value of high achievement for students. Using NELS data collected on eighth graders who were followed up in tenth grade, twelfth grade, and two years post-high school, the authors studied the impact of social capital on enrollment in a four-year college. They found that high parental expectations, parent-child discussion of school activities, attending a Catholic school, parent-school involvement, and frequent contact between parents and schools regarding academic issues positively impacted children's likelihood of attending a four-year college. However, the relationship between family structure and enrollment in a four-year college was weak while intergenerational closure did not predict college attendance.

The authors point out the importance of the impact of social capital on enrollment in a four-year college saying that:

...all else being equal, the predicted probability of four-year college enrollment for a student who often discusses school activities with parents is 0.46 compared to 0.43 for a student whose family earns an income in the highest income quintile. Moreover, comparing families who never discuss school activities and those whom often discuss school activities results in a 20% divergence in the predicted probability of four-year college enrollment, whereas the divergence between those in the lowest

and highest income quintiles is more modest at 8%. Thus, some aspects of social capital can generate rewards similar to financial capital, and they may be able to improve one's chances of post-secondary education as much if not more than changes in other forms of capital.

Santos (2002) examined the concept of intergenerational closure, part of Coleman's conceptualization of social capital, and its relationship to math achievement. Santos (2002) used a NELS data set of 17, 652 eighth graders with follow-up data collected on the students in 10th grade, 12th grade and two years after high school graduation. Three variables were used to measure the social capital concept of intergenerational closure. These variables were: "parents know parents" (whether parents knew the parents of their children's five closest friends), "friends in school" (whether the child's friends named by the parent were friends in school), and "friends named by parents" (in order to impose an upper bound on the "parents know parents" and friends in school" variables"). In addition, a "parent-child school-related index" variable measured the extent to which parents communicated with children about school related topics and a "parent participation in school activities" measured the extent to which parents participated in school activities. The students' 12th grade math achievement score was used as a dependent variable. Santos found that after controlling for background variables (i.e., SES, race, gender, prior achievement) parent-child discussion of school-related topics and parent-child joint participation in school activities (e.g., sports, plays) were important predictors of math achievement. However, the "parents know parents", "friends in school", and "number of friends recalled" variables were not significant predictors of math achievement. Despite the non-significant finding for the "parents

know parents variable, Santos (2002) notes that parental social networks could still play a role in children's math achievement. Prior research has shown that the parents with whom parents form relationships because of children's school and non-school activities are an important of parental social networks. Thus, Santos notes that in this study, parents' participation in school activities with their children might have given them access to social networks that enabled them to be more effective in promoting their children's academic achievement.

Santos (2002) also found that the "parents know parents" variable had a negative effect on achievement in schools with larger populations of African American students. However, Santos also found that a higher concentration of African American students in a school reduced the negative effect of the "parents know parents" variable. Santos notes that it is possible that in some schools that were more segregated, parents were more likely to form connections with each other and pass on information that supported the achievement of their children. He also notes that this points to the need to study not only the quantity of parents' social networks, but also the quality. He argues that, "...better measures of parental intergenerational closure are needed" and suggests that "...ethnographic research could provide richer information about this issue. For instance, regarding the kind of information channeled through parental networks...(2002, p. 13)"

A small body of qualitative research (Dika & Singh, 2002) has examined cultural and social capital and how parents draw on these resources to engage in their children's education and their broader lives. Lareau's (2003) ethnographic work that followed a small group of middle class and poor and working class families captures Bourdieu's ideas about habitus in the lives of American families from different class backgrounds.

Lareau found that middle-class parents engage in a cultural logic of child rearing that includes *concerted cultivation*, while lower- and working-class parents emphasize the *accomplishment of natural growth*. She found that middle class parents “enroll their children in numerous age-specific organized activities” and “view these activities as transmitting important life skills to children” (p. 748). In contrast, working class and poor parents “believe that as long as they provide love, food, and safety, their children will grow and thrive” (p. 748). She noted that the ways in which middle class parents rear their children transmit to them the attitudes and dispositions they need for success in school and the formal institutions of modern life.

With regard to schooling, Lareau (2003) argues that part of the embodied cultural capital middle class parents brought to bear on their children’s education was their understanding of schools as places that could be negotiated to customize their children’s experience and fit their children’s particular needs. In contrast, the cultural capital that poor and working class families in the study possessed consisted of an understanding that parents should defer to the expertise and judgment of school staff and follow their lead. Lareau (2003) describes these parents’ approach to school thus:

Most working-class and poor parents believed it was inappropriate for them to intervene in their children’s day-to-day classroom experiences. They expected teachers to shoulder the responsibility of educating children, and they presumed that if there were problems, the school would contact them, not vice-versa (p. 216-217).

Chin & Phillips (2004) examined how parents’ social and cultural capital influenced the manner in which they accessed resources in order to support their

children's development during summer breaks. Building on Lareau's (2003) earlier work, the authors were interested in examining why middle class families, in comparison to poor families, were better able to structure their children's lives and put them in organized activities, particularly during the summers. They collected ethnographic data on 32 Asian, African American, and Latino middle class, poor, and working class children. The authors found that poor and working class and middle class parents were all equally interested in developing the skills and talents of their children. However, middle class parents were more successful at securing opportunities for their children to do so not only because of financial resources but because they had greater knowledge about how to match specific activities to their children's particular skills and interests, demonstrating more knowledge about how to structure academic activities so they were more appealing to children.

Reay (1998) examined the role working class and middle class mothers at two London schools played in their children's schooling. She found that middle class mothers had higher levels of embodied cultural capital than working class mothers in engaging with school staff as they were more assertive, socially confident, and had more knowledge of the school system. In addition, based on participants' discussions of the role their mothers had played in their education, she noted that middle class mothers' cultural histories included mothers who had provided extra academic assistance and resources in addition to school and that the middle class mothers in the study in turn engaged in the same actions with their children.

Social and Cultural Capital and Immigrant Parents

Very little research has examined immigrant parents' engagement in their children's schooling using the concept of cultural capital. Research that has been done so far has defined social and cultural capital in different ways and produced sometimes contradictory findings.

Portes (2002) used NELS data on 3,400 second-generation immigrant children (Mexican, Filipinos, Korean, and Chinese) and compared them to 2,500 randomly selected native born (and born to native parents) children to assess the effects of social capital on academic achievement (GPA and a standardized academic achievement test). In keeping with Coleman's ideas, he operationalized social capital as closure of parental networks (measured by parents' knowledge of their children's friends' parents) and parent school involvement (measured using an index of parents' participation in school activities and frequency of school meetings with school staff about academic issues). Portes found that when children's age, sex, parent SES, knowledge of English, and length of time residing in the U.S. were controlled for, the social capital measures had insignificant effects on academic achievement. Portes argued that his results show that, "...what really counts, at the end, is the social and economic status of the family, the children's ability in English, and their length of residence in the country. Once these factors are considered, the apparent effects of social capital largely disappear" (Portes, 2002, p. 9). However, Portes noted that children's nationality was predictive of academic achievement. He noted that Korean and Chinese students overachieve in comparison to other students and Mexican students underachieve relative to other students, even after controlling for their family's SES background. Portes (2002) notes that some may

account for this by talking about “ethnic effects”, an explanation that says it is “...community networks and support, not isolated families, that play the central role in children's educational success.” (Portes, 2000, p. 9). While Portes (2000) acknowledges that ethnic-specific social capital might be responsible for the success of the Korean and Chinese students in the NELS sample, he does note that their success might be better accounted for by *cultural capital*, in the form of values inoculated in children during the socialization process, particularly as earlier authors have pointed out that the “Confucian work ethic” partly accounts for the high levels of academic achievement among many immigrant Chinese students.

Kao & Taggart Rutherford (2007) also used NELS data to examine the achievement of immigrant students. Since NELS surveys ask about the birthplace of children and parents, the authors were able to examine differences between a sample of 16,489 first, second, and third generation Asian, White, Hispanic, and Black children. Social capital was operationalized as intergenerational closure (how well parents knew the parents of their children’s friends) and parent-school involvement (e.g., volunteering, and involvement in parent-teacher organizations). Academic achievement was measured using a composite of GPA and scores on standardized reading and math achievement tests.

The authors found differences in academic achievement by ethnic group and immigration status that were consistent with previous research. For instance, first generation Hispanic students have higher grades than second generation and third generation Hispanics. With regard to how much social capital was possessed by the groups in the study, the researchers found that first generation immigrant children and the

children of immigrants possessed much lower levels of social capital than did their third generation peers. As for the impact of social capital, the authors found that intergenerational closure and parent-school involvement positively impacted 8th grade academic achievement. The authors also found that social capital had differential effects for children depending on their race-immigrant group. For instance, Black students benefited more from the same level of parent-school involvement as White students while Asian students benefited less. For intergenerational closure, Asian students reaped more benefits in comparison to White and Black students.

Kao & Taggart Rutherford (2007) note that immigrant parents' lower levels of social capital, as measured by this study, is probably accounted for by their lack of familiarity with American norms and customs, and the English language, which would limit their involvement with parent-teacher organizations and their ability to form relationships with the parents of their children's friends, particularly if these parents were native born. The authors also note that their study, and by extension all studies that use NELS data, did not account for ethnic-specific forms of capital derived from close knit ethnic communities. They point out that the differential returns to social capital for minority and immigrant students might be, "...related to the norms, values, and beliefs reinforced by social networks, as well as the parents' and students' ability to activate their social capital to produce favorable educational outcomes" (Kao & Taggart Rutherford, 2007, p. 48). To answer this question and better illuminate the role social capital plays in academic achievement, they note that it is important for research to explore the *quality* of social capital possessed by parents.

Zhou & Bankston (1998), in their research on a Vietnamese immigrant community in New Orleans, elaborated on the concept of social capital in important ways, arguing that for immigrant populations, their ethnic community can serve as an important source of social capital. The authors studied a low income immigrant Vietnamese community over the course of two years using ethnographic methods. The authors found that the high level of achievement of the Vietnamese students in the sample was maintained by cultural values conducive to achievement and bounded social networks of co-ethnic peers and adults that emphasized the same values and reinforced behavior that complied with these values. In addition, the Vietnamese community in the study provided students in the study with academic resources such as after-school language classes and academic programs that provided academic assistance as well as awards for academic excellence. Overall, the authors concluded that:

Successful adaptation of Vietnamese in poor urban neighborhoods has been determined, to a large extent, by distinctive patterns of ethnic social relationships...Systems of ethnic social relations exercise social control over their members, reinforcing both traditional values brought from Vietnam and aspirations to upward mobility...being enmeshed in these dense overlapping networks of social relations based on shared ethnicity creates a high degree of consensus over community-prescribed values and norms and effective means of social control, which can serve as a special form of social capital. (p. 222)

In addition, the authors note that the institutions present in the community (e.g., after-school programs) are, "...formal expressions of underlying networks of ethnic social

relations, which...for younger members offer direction and encouragement in school adaptation” (p. 222).

Lew (2007), in his study of Korean American students in New Jersey, found that social capital played a role in the success of one group and the failure of another group. He examined two groups of Korean students, an academically successful group and an academically unsuccessful group to understand how class variability within co-ethnic Asian communities impacts second-generation students’ access to social capital and educational resources. His study of Korean American dropouts illuminates how social capital, derived in this case from co-ethnic networks, can interact with financial capital to produce negative and positive outcomes for immigrant students. Based on the work of other researchers and theorists in the social capital literature, Lew argues that:

If social capital derives from social relationships, then different groups of students and parents also have varying degrees of advantage based on class, race, and institutional discourses within the network. Thus, social networks are implicated in the reproduction of inequality” (Lew, 2007, p. 375).

Thus, Lew’s work appears to align with Bourdieu’s ideas about differential access to capital, in this case social capital, depending on family background. In his study, Lew (2007) used ethnographic methods to examine the experiences of 42 academically successful Korean American students enrolled in an academic magnet high school program and 30 Korean American students who were dropouts enrolled in a GED program. The sample included both 1.5 generation students (defined as students who

were born and raised in Korea and came to the U.S. at the age of 9 or earlier) and second-generation students (those who were born and raised in the U.S.).

Similar to Zhou & Bankston's work (1998), the author found that high achieving Korean American students maintained closer ties to co-ethnics at home, school, and in the community. In addition, their parents were often acquainted with each other through Korean American churches or Korean American community organizations. The high-achieving students reported that these organizations and churches emphasized certain values for young people, specifically academic achievement, learning the Korean language, and maintaining close ethnic ties. These students also reported that the parents of their friends shared the same value orientation (particularly to high achievement) that their parents endorsed. Lew described the influence of parental social networks on high achieving Korean American students in the sample thus: "Through the structure of a closed intergenerational social-support network among parents, community members, and peers, academically focused Korean American students received multiple sources of social pressure to succeed in school." (2007, p. 379).

Like the high achieving students in the study, the dropouts also reported high parental expectations for academic achievement. However, unlike the high achieving students, the Korean American dropouts did not maintain close ties to their parents or their parents' co-ethnic networks and, in fact, reported that their parents had few ties to co-ethnic networks in the Korean American community.

The high achieving students also reported that their parents accessed information from co-ethnic networks that supported their academic achievement, for instance information about elite high schools and how to prepare for entrance exams to these

schools. The parents of the high achieving students used economic resources to translate their educational aspirations and the knowledge they gained from co-ethnic networks into actions that ensured the success of their children by sending them to private academies (*hag won*) in the Korean American community. These academies provided tutoring for academic subjects, for entrance exams to elite high schools, and for college preparatory exams. The high achieving students reported that their parents learned about this resource through their co-ethnic networks in Korean American churches and community organizations. The parents also sent their children to private college counselors who spoke Korean and, as a result, these parents were able to learn about the U.S. educational system and play a larger role in their children's college application process.

In contrast, the dropouts in the study did not attend the *hag won* academies either because their parents could not afford to send them or because their families were dependent on the income these students brought in by working after school. Their parents, with limited knowledge of the U.S. educational system and no access to the knowledge present in co-ethnic networks, did not actively participate in their education, leaving it entirely up to the schools.

Finally, while most studies of social and cultural capital have examined these concepts in a static fashion, Auerbach (2004) examined how social and cultural capital can change in response to school-based interventions. Specifically, she examined a program aimed at increasing college attendance among Latino high school students and how the program ultimately increased the social and cultural capital of the students' parents. Auerbach (2004) used ethnographic methods to examine, over the course of three years, the experiences of 15 Latino parents in the program. She found that when the

program commenced, the Latino parents lacked basic knowledge about the college application process, such as the classes required for college acceptance, but also lacked social networks that could provide them with knowledge about the college application process.

The researcher noted that while participants did not leave the program with as much knowledge as more affluent parents in the school, the program was successful in changing part of their *habitus*. That is, parents expanded their sense of what was possible for them and their children and changed their beliefs about what was appropriate and desirable for their children. Their participation in the program led them to see college as a viable option for their children. In addition, parents modified some of their behaviors and beliefs that had functioned as obstacles to their children's college attendance. For instance, an immigrant father accepted the possibility that college attendance would mean his daughter leaving home and other parents decreased household chores for girls so that they could study and earn better grades. The program also impacted social capital by helping parents form positive relationships with teachers and school staff as well as with other parents experiencing similar issues with the college process and parenting.

Crozier & Davis (2008) in a qualitative study of 197 Bangladeshi and Pakistani parents in two British towns found that parents' lack of cultural capital negatively impacted the home-school relationship. Though the authors do not explicitly use Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital to explain their findings, it is clear that Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and cultural capital might be applied to the experiences of the participants in this study. The study assessed the parents' relationship with the schools their children attended. The authors found that the school had certain expectations of

parental involvement that the parents could not meet, partly because they were unaware of these expectations. They argued that this information was informally disseminated through social networks such as “parents’ meetings and at the school gate, on the grapevine, between other [British] parents”, networks the authors described as, “spaces uninhabited, or not visited, by most of our parent respondents.” (Crozier & Davis, 2008, p. 300). Parents in the study did rely on their social networks to gain information about how to successfully navigate the schooling process. However, since these social networks consisted of other immigrant parents with equally low levels of knowledge of the British school system, the educational capital shared among parents was limited.

Overall, Crozier and Davis (2008) found that a few parents in their study were actively involved in their children’s education and successful at navigating the educational system to secure benefits for their children. However, most parents in the study, regardless of social class background, were “non-participants” in their children’s education; they had little contact with the school, knew little about the education system, and left most major educational decisions concerning their children in the hands of the school. Crozier & Davis (2008) contend that the school had expectations for parent involvement and that the parents in the study lacked knowledge of the school’s expectations of “appropriate” parental involvement; in the words of Bourdieu, this was not part of their *habitus*. The authors assert that, “..the school’s implicit expectations are based on an, albeit subconscious, assumption that all parents are ‘like us’: ‘like us’ being white and middle class and that “These explicit and implicit expectations underpinned the relationship between the school and the home.” (Crozier & Davis, 2008, p. 301-302). Using Bourdieu’s theoretical framework to analyze Crozier & Davis’s results, it is

apparent that the study parents' habitus did not mesh with institutional expectations; so no embodied cultural capital was created to help them navigate their children's schooling.

Asian Indian Families

There have been no studies that examine how Asian Indian families access social and/or cultural capital in engaging with their children's schooling. In fact, very few studies have examined how these families engage with their children's schooling. The few studies that do so (e.g., Abbas, 2002) have been conducted in England and/or Asian Indian families were not the focus of the research, which included other South Asian populations (e.g., Bhattacharya & Schopeley, 2004).

Bhattacharya & Schopeley (2004) in a study of the pre- and post-immigration beliefs about success of South Asians interviewed 75 Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi parents in the New York City area. They found that, like the other parents in the sample, Indian parents placed a high value on education prior to immigration and strengthened their belief in its importance post-immigration due to the lack of economic opportunities they faced upon arrival in the U.S. In addition, during the pre-immigration period, parents had believed that they would be able to advance economically in America; however, following immigration, they placed their hopes in their children. The study also gave a more detailed picture of parental expectations, which the studies that use panel data sets have not done. In discussing the parental expectations of the Indian families in the study, they argue that:

... the Asian philosophy of life may further accentuate the strong link between parental expectations of children's accomplishments and the children's responsibilities to fulfill the parents' dreams of life success.

Four Asian culture-specific concepts—*dharma*, *karma*, *maya*, and *atman*—may serve as unique mechanisms for the intergenerational transmission of expectations and aspirations. (2004, p. 90)”

The authors assert that ”While parents expected their children to be educated and to succeed in life, this individual-level achievement is not valued as an end in itself but rather as a means to ensuring and enhancing the well-being of the entire family” (Bhattacharya & Schopely, 2004, p. 90).

Abbas (2002) surveyed 109 Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi college students about their secondary experiences. The sample included 37 Indian students. He found that, compared to the other students in the study, the Indian students reported that their parents were very active in helping them gain admission to selective secondary schools. In addition, they reported that siblings assisted them with this process.

Overall, limitations of the research on social capital include the use of large data sets which have limited the researcher’s ability to gain an in-depth understanding of concepts like parental networks and intergenerational closure. Moreover, very little research in the U.S. has used Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of cultural capital to gain a more critical understanding of parental engagement with schooling. A small number of studies (e.g., Horvath & Lareau, 2003) have examined the forms of capital that parents access to engage in their children’s schooling; but, these studies have not examined the experiences of immigrant groups in the U.S. Research that has examined the experiences of immigrant parents (e.g., Zhou & Bankston, 1998) has found that they access forms of capital rooted in their ethnic community. Finally, none of the research on social and

cultural capital has examined the experiences of Asian Indian families in the U.S. in depth.

Qualitative Research

Research on the role of immigrant parents in their children's education has called for research to be attuned to the existing inequities in society, how the particular immigrant group being researched is affected by those inequities, and the receiving context for immigrants (Portes, 2000). Given this recommendation and the nature of the questions asked (an in-depth examination of the understandings of a particular group), the current study was conducted using a qualitative approach.

Qualitative research assumes that meanings are developed in people's experiences and that these meanings are understood through the investigator's own perceptions (Merriam, 1998). Guba and Lincoln (1998) note that "human behavior...cannot be understood without reference to the meanings and purposes attached by human actors to their activities" (p. 198). In addition, many qualitative researchers and theorists point out that the etic (outsider) view brought to bear on research problems may not shed much light on these problems without the emic (insider) view of groups, individuals, and cultures under study. The aim of this study was to gain an emic view of a particular cultural group (in this case Asian Indian mothers).

In sum, this research was an in-depth examination of the beliefs and views of a specific minority group in U.S. society. A qualitative approach was selected because it allowed for examining in detail the experiences of individuals.

Chapter Three

Method

This study examined the engagement of Asian Indian mothers residing in the U.S. in their children's schooling. Specifically, the study examined the extent to which Asian Indian mothers accessed various forms of social and cultural capital in engaging in their children's schooling.

This study employed a qualitative approach which allowed for an in-depth exploration of the perceptions and beliefs of study participants. The selection of participants and the collection and analysis of data are discussed below. Huberman and Miles (1998) note that researchers should be explicit about their preferences and tell readers, "how they construe the shape of the social world and how they mean to give us a credible account of it" (p. 181).

Participants

A purposeful sampling procedure was used to select the participants for this study. The sample consisted of 12 participants, mothers from 12 Asian Indian families living in the State of Florida who had children enrolled in public K-12 schools during the 2008-2009 school year. The participant from each of the 12 families was the parent more integrally involved with the child or children's schooling, which in each of the families interviewed was the mother. All participants had resided in the United States for a minimum of two years, and held permanent resident status or were U.S. citizens. Only mothers whose children were enrolled in a single large urban school district in West

Central Florida were included as participants in the study. This setting was selected for reasons of convenience (the researcher was located in West Central Florida and has contacts in the Asian Indian community in the city in which the participants lived). Procedures used in the recruitment of study participants are described below.

Participant Recruitment

According to Frankel and Wallen (2000), purposive sampling is the process of using personal judgment to select a sample based on previous knowledge of a population and the specific purposes of the research. The sample was recruited through two sources: (1) Asian Indian community members in a large West Central Florida city and (2) an Asian Indian community association located in the same city. The two avenues for participant recruitment were pursued simultaneously. The community members included a teacher of Indian dance and a community member active in a local Hindu temple. These community members were selected due to their acquaintance with large numbers of Asian Indian families with school-aged children. The researcher gave the two community contacts a brief oral description of the study as well as a copy of the Brief Study Description she had prepared (see Appendix A) for their use when informing potential recruits for the study. In addition, they were provided a copy of the study consent form. They were asked to contact prospective families that fit the study criteria (i.e., Asian Indian origin, residing in the U.S., with children enrolled in K-12 public schools in the U.S. during the 2008-2009 school year, etc.). Using the Brief Study Description, they provided potential participants with an overview of the study and asked them if they would like to be provided with more information. If potential participants were interested in receiving more information, the association member or the community

member asked them for their addresses and for permission to share this information with the researcher. The researcher mailed potential participants: a cover letter (see Appendix B), a copy of the Demographic Questionnaire (see Appendix C), a consent form approved by the University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (USF IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, Board #2 for Social and Behavioral Sciences, (see Appendix D) and a postage paid, pre-addressed return envelope. The Demographic Questionnaire which asked for demographic data (e.g., no. of years in the US; no of school age children in household and their grade level) was also mailed at this time. This questionnaire was used as a screening device to identify those participants who met the study criteria for inclusion in the sample. The consent form mailed to participants indicated that: there would be two phases to the study, with the first being the interview and the second being a follow-up for the verification of the interview transcript and analysis (the consent form noted that this follow-up could take place in person or by telephone). The consent form also indicated the estimated duration of the interview and the follow-up meeting, noted that the interview would be recorded, and described the procedures to be used to maintain confidentiality.

In case potential participants misplaced the study forms, two weeks after the initial mailing, another mailing was completed to all non-respondents. This mailing included a follow-up letter, the USF IRB consent form, and a postage paid, pre-addressed return envelope.

Some families were referred to the researcher and contacted her for the purpose of arranging a face-to-face meeting. In these cases, the researcher explained the purposes of the study and gave the parent(s)/guardians copies of: the cover letter, the Demographic

Questionnaire, the USF IRB-approved consent form, the researcher's contact information (address, telephone number, and email address), and a pre-addressed return envelope. Potential participants were asked to return a signed consent form by mail if they wanted to participate in the study and to provide their mailing address to the researcher so she could follow up with them. In case potential participants misplaced the study forms, two weeks after the face-to-face meeting, the researcher completed another mailing that included: a follow-up letter, the Demographic Questionnaire, a USF IRB consent form, and a postage paid, pre-addressed return envelope. Overall, the researcher attempted to contact 15 Asian Indian mothers and received responses from 12 of these mothers.

This procedure resulted in a participant sample consisting of mothers from 12 Asian Indian families living in the State of Florida who had children enrolled in public K-12 schools during the 2008-2009 school year. All participants had resided in the U.S. for a minimum of two years, and held permanent resident status or were U.S. citizens. Only families whose children were enrolled in a large school district in West Central Florida were included as participants in this study. This setting was selected for reasons of convenience (the researcher was located in West Central Florida and has contacts in the Asian Indian community in the city in which the participants lived).

Instrumentation

The following instruments were used for the purposes of data gathering.

Demographic Questionnaire

This questionnaire (see Appendix C) was used to screen potential participants to determine if they met study criteria (e.g., length of residence in the U.S., immigration status).

Background Questionnaire

Participants were asked to complete a background questionnaire (see Appendix F) that included questions soliciting basic demographic information such as income, highest education level, and household composition (single parent, two parent, etc), and information about their children's academic achievement.

Interview Protocol

A semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix E) was developed within the context of this study to gather data relating to three broad domains of interest: a) embodied cultural capital, (b) social norms, and (c) social networks. For each domain, a series of questions and potential follow-up questions were developed. The process that guided the development of the protocol follows.

A review of the literature identified no existing instrument for use in obtaining information about how Asian Indian parents access cultural and social capital in order to engage in their children's education. Thus, prior theoretical literature (e.g., Bourdieu, 1987; Coleman, 1988) and how previous research (e.g., Zhou & Bankston, 1998) has operationalized these concepts informed the development of the interview protocol used for this study.

As previously noted, this study focused on social capital (norms and social networks) and cultural capital, specifically the embodied form of cultural capital. The researcher reviewed the writings of Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) and prior research studies (e.g., Perna & Titus, 2001) to delineate the concepts of social capital and cultural capital for the purposes of this study. Once each of these concepts was clearly delineated, interview questions were developed that corresponded to these concepts. In

keeping with the theoretical framework of the study, the interview protocol was divided into three major topic domains, embodied cultural capital, social norms, and social networks.

Based on the writings of Bourdieu (e.g., Bourdieu, 1987) and explication of Bourdieu's theories by others (e.g., Horvat, 2005), the first topic domain on the interview protocol, embodied cultural capital, asked participants questions such as, "How would you rank the importance of education in comparison to other aspects of children's lives?" and, "Overall, what do you think the role of parents should be in their children's education?" Based on Coleman's (1988) work and prior research on social capital, the second topic domain, social norms, asks questions such as, "How often do you engage in conversation with your child/children about school, school work or their performance in school?," "What kinds of topics do you talk about in these conversations?" and, "With whom do(es) your child/children typically engage in after-school activities?"

Questions in the last topic domain, social networks, were based on readings of both Bourdieu (1987) and Coleman's work, but more closely based on how more recent research (e.g., Lew, 2007; Lin, 2001) has understood and examined social networks. Examples of questions asked in this area include: "How would you rank the importance of the information that you receive from other parents in making educational decisions?" and "When you speak to other parents for educational information, who do you tend to talk to?"

Carspecken (1996) recommends a semi-structured questionnaire as an appropriate approach to qualitative interviewing. Others (e.g., Fontana & Frey, 2000) use the term open-ended ethnographic interviews to describe interviewing with a semi-structured

questionnaire. The use of a semi-structured protocol allowed for maximum flexibility on the part of the interviewer for pursuing topics of interest. Topic domains and lead-off questions were used to organize the semi-structured protocol. Carspecken notes that interviewers should use concrete questions to identify abstractions and avoid asking abstract questions because it is important to “hear about the implicit theories” from interviewees (Carspecken, 1996, p. 156) constituting the actions of participants. He argues that “Often people act according to one implicit theory, and talk out theories that are very different” (p. 156). Thus, although questions were developed to address the theoretical concepts in which the study was interested, the questions were worded in clear, concrete, everyday language.

The protocol used for the study provided the interviewer with a lead-off question to begin interviewing in each area and possible follow-up questions aimed at eliciting additional information in the areas of interest. Carspecken (1996) notes that during a qualitative interview “the researcher will spend most of her time responding to things said by her subjects rather than asking questions” (p., 155). Thus participants were given the freedom to expand on topics about which they wanted to elaborate and often did so.

Data Collection Procedures

The interviews were conducted throughout the summer of 2009. Once consent was obtained and it had been confirmed through review of the Demographic Questionnaire that participants met study criteria (e.g., length of residence in the U.S.), the researcher contacted mothers to arrange an interview time. Most interviews took place in the participants’ homes, but a few took place in public locations that were convenient for the participants (e.g., a local coffee shop). Before beginning the

interviews, the researcher reviewed the informed consent form with participants, discussed what participating in the study would require (e.g., audio taped interview), and reminded participants that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. Interviews lasted for approximately one and one-half hours, with some interviews lasting longer than this time frame, and were audio recorded. In addition to recording the interviews, the researcher took handwritten notes that usually consisted of impressions of the interviewees and comments on the topics discussed. These notes were subsequently typed up, usually within one day of the interview. After the interview was completed, participants were asked to complete a background questionnaire (see Appendix F) in writing. Participants completed the questionnaire alone. However, the researcher offered to clarify any questions that were unclear for the participant. Each participant was thanked for her participation in the research and told to expect a follow-up contact to review her transcribed interview and the preliminary analysis of the interview.

Data Management

Each family was assigned a pseudonym. The researcher kept a list of the family's names and pseudonyms in a locked file drawer in her home. Recordings of the interviews were also stored in this file drawer. Pseudonyms were also used in transcription of the interview data and in reporting the results of the study. A peer debriefer was used in this study (see the section on the Development of Codes for a detailed description of the peer debriefer's role); however, the transcripts that the peer reviewer accessed contained only pseudonyms. Transcripts of interviews with families were stored in password protected files on the researcher's computer.

Data Analysis Procedures

Chism (1999) notes that,

The analysis of qualitative data involves several activities, including: becoming familiar with the data, selecting certain parts of the data as most relevant, sorting the data into categories, displaying the data for review, reading within and across categories for themes, and synthesizing the information. (p. 1)

Data analysis was conducted during as well as after the conclusion of the data collection process. As previously noted, qualitative methodologists (e.g., Huberman & Miles, 1998) point out that researchers should be explicit about their preferences and pay attention to any potential biases and assumptions that may impact data collection and analysis. Consequently, the researcher maintained field notes to keep track of her thoughts, feelings, and impressions as she collected data as a way of monitoring any biases that might influence analyses of the data. The researcher also reviewed these field notes for assistance in identifying areas in which she should probe more deeply with future interviewees.

The tape recording for each interview was transcribed verbatim. Interviews were transcribed within a week of their completion. Then preliminary analysis was conducted on each transcript, with the researcher reviewing the transcript and noting preliminary themes that she typed into a Microsoft Word document. These preliminary themes were shared with participants for their review as part of the member checking process.

LeCompte and Schensul (1999) point out that, often, reviewing fieldnotes and other data collected will result in new questions and interpretations to be tested by collecting more

data in the field. Thus, these preliminary analyses were also used to help the researcher identify areas into which she should probe more deeply with future interviewees. For instance, the first participant interviewed discussed the competitiveness in the Indian community around academics. As a result, the researcher began to ask other participants about competitiveness in the community around academics.

Once participants had reviewed and approved their transcripts and the preliminary analyses, the researcher began the second stage of analysis. First, the study questions were reviewed so that they would guide the analysis of the data. Second, transcripts were reread several times in order for the researcher to become familiar with the data. Then, the transcripts were loaded into ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis software package designed to assist in the process of management of data during the coding and analysis of datasets such as transcribed interview data (Muhr & Friese, 2004). ATLAS.ti is commonly used in qualitative research because it facilitates the analysis of large quantities of textual data. The researcher is familiar with ATLAS.ti and had utilized the software prior to this study. It is important to note that all codes used in this study were researcher-developed. In this study, ATLAS-ti was not used to generate codes, but as a tool to facilitate the coding of large sections of text and to, in the later analysis stages, retrieve sections of text that corresponded to these codes; this is consistent with the use of qualitative data analysis software programs in research (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

Development of Codes

Once the interview transcripts were entered into ATLAS-ti, the researcher began the process of developing a codebook. A codebook is one of the tools used by qualitative researchers to label, sort, organize, and categorize qualitative data into meaningful units.

LeCompte and Schensul (1999) describe a codebook as "...a list of items to be used for the analysis of a particular collection of data." (p. 85). They note that codes are "...names or symbols used to stand for a group of similar items, ideas, or other phenomena" (p. 55) and that codes are "...relatively concrete items or units that are relatively easy to identify and well differentiated from each other...they have clear boundaries" (p. 95).

The researcher made the decision to use ATLAS-ti to assist in performing this preliminary coding because of the large volume of data. As LeCompte and Schensul (1999) note, it is useful to use software programs like ATLAS- in preliminary stages of coding, particularly when one is working with large amounts of data.

The researcher used a combination of deductive and inductive coding strategies to develop the codebook for the study. Huberman and Miles (1998) point out that, "Qualitative studies ultimately aim to describe and explain (at some level) a pattern of relationships....Starting with them (deductively) or getting gradually to them (inductively) are both legitimate and useful paths" (p. 185). LeCompte and Schensul (1999) note further that coding is often both deductive (driven by the theoretical framework of a study) and inductive, derived from the data collected in the study. Thus the researcher used both deductive and inductive approaches to coding in this study.

Using a deductive approach, the first step in developing the codebook was to examine the theoretical framework of the study for potential codes. For instance, "Origins of their belief systems about education" was one of the codes identified at this stage). Next, using an inductive approach, the preliminary analyses developed for participants to verify were examined for any possible codes that arose (e.g.,

“Competitiveness in community” was one of the codes identified at this stage). These inductively derived codes were added to the preliminary codebook. Continuing with the inductive approach, two transcripts were randomly selected. The researcher read these transcripts and assigned codes based on meanings that emerged from her readings.

Simultaneous to the researcher coding the two transcripts, a peer debriefer coded the same two transcripts independently. The peer debriefer was an experienced qualitative researcher employed in the Anthropology Department at the University of South Florida. This person was familiar with the research questions and the theoretical background used in the study. Carspecken (1996) suggests researcher use peer debriefers early in the coding process to question their choice of codes. Thus, at the beginning of codebook development, the researchers gave two transcripts, an interview protocol, and a copy of the research questions to the peer debriefer to code independently and to develop her own preliminary codebook in order to verify the researcher’s choice of codes. Once the peer debriefer had coded the two transcripts independently and developed her own preliminary codebook, the researcher and the peer debriefer met to compare the preliminary codebooks they had developed independently. At this point, the researcher and the peer debriefer spent a great deal of time discussing the transcripts they had coded, the reasons they had selected the codes they did, and the differences and similarities between their two preliminary codebooks. The peer debriefer and the researcher discarded some codes, added others, and refined others. At this point, the peer debriefer and the researcher merged the two preliminary codebooks they had created to create a working codebook.

Next, interrater reliability was computed. The researcher and the peer debriefer separated to code one randomly selected transcript independently using the working codebook. The researcher and the peer debriefer then met again to make the final changes to the working codebook based on their coding of this transcript and discussion, turn it into the codebook to be used for the study, and to calculate interrater reliability for the coding process. Interrater reliability was calculated at the 81% level. This codebook was used by the researcher to code the remaining interview data; minimal changes were made to add codes that were needed to capture new ideas that emerged from the remaining interview data. See Appendix F for a copy of the codebook used for the study.

At this point, the researcher and the peer debriefer also had an extensive discussion about preliminary themes that appeared to be present in the data and about issues it would be important for the researcher to take into account while conducting her analysis. For instance, the peer debriefer noted that she believed it would be important for the researcher to consider the role that social class background played in influencing the findings. She noted that in the transcripts she reviewed, mothers had expressed their belief that staying home allowed them to play a more active role in their children's education and that it was important to consider whether, in comparison to poorer families, the families' financial resources made it easier for them to make this decision. Finally, the researcher used the completed codebook to code the remaining interview data by selecting sections of text and labeling them with the code or codes that appeared to best capture the meaning of the section of text.

Theme Analysis

Using a hermeneutic-reconstructive method which required the researcher to make implicit meanings explicit (Carspecken, 1996, 2003), transcripts were examined for themes that emerged across interviewees. When utilizing this approach, the researcher “takes the insider’s view of a cultural group and reconstructs tacit cultural themes and structures that members commonly employ to interpret the world [and] judge the world...” (Colón, Taylor, and Willis, 2000, para. 8).

LeCompte and Schensul (1999) describe themes as being part of a category of data that are less concrete. They note that themes “...illustrate phenomena that are hard to operationalize except in terms of multiple discrete behaviors that do not have clean beginnings and endings, and that may have multiple meanings. Often these must be identified in terms of some cover term or category name that stands for a complex of behaviors or ideas” (p. 95). After coding was completed, the researcher reviewed the codebook to see which codes aligned with which research questions in order to determine where to focus theme analysis for each research question. Multiple codes were assigned to each research question. For instance, for the research question regarding embodied cultural capital, assigned codes included, “Beliefs about the value/importance of education” and “Beliefs about their role in their children's education.

Next, the researcher used ATLAS-ti to find textual segments connected to each code and in turn to one of the research questions. Then, the researcher initiated theme analysis. Theme analysis was conducted across participant interviews in an effort to find themes that cut across cases (Huberman & Miles, 1998). LeCompte and Schensul (1999) describe several ways in which patterns or themes can emerge from data, including:

through declarations by participants (participants telling researchers that a pattern exists), frequency (participants' talking often about a particular thing), similarity (participants talking about a thing in similar ways), and in congruence with prior hypotheses (patterns emergence in accordance with theoretical frameworks guiding a study or prior experience).

Theme analysis was conducted for each research question separately. Text segments were reviewed for preliminary themes connected to the research question. Next, the researcher spent a large amount of time reading and rereading the text segments corresponding to each research question to further refine the preliminary themes. During this process, preliminary themes were revised several times until they appeared to align with the meanings embedded in the data. Finally, themes were reviewed to obtain endorsement rates. Huberman and Miles (1998) note that in cross-case analysis, "...the tension...is that of reconciling the particular and the universal: reconciling an individual case's uniqueness with the need to understand generic processes at work across cases" (p. 194). The researcher balanced these competing priorities by reporting exceptions to themes, that is, in addition to reporting the views of participants who endorsed particular themes, the views of those who did not endorse particular themes were also reported.

Credibility

In any form of research, issues of validity are critical as such issues impact perceptions of the research. Carspecken (1996) points out that interviewing produces many subjective truth claims and that we are dependent on the honesty and accuracy of the self-reports of the participants. Qualitative researchers must also be concerned with minimizing any biases and seeing the experiences that participants relate just as they are

and not attempt to alter them or to read more into them than what is really there (Patton, 2002). Thus, researchers should be concerned about not altering the reality of the data. However, Carspecken (1996) and others (Lincoln & Guba, 1998; Patton, 2002) describe procedures that should be used to address these issues and strengthen the validity claims within interview data.

Non-leading Interview Questions

First, non-leading interview questions were used. Interviewing in non-leading ways decreased the possibility that participants would tell the researcher what they thought she wanted to hear. Second, as much as possible, participants were encouraged to use terms in their own everyday language. This encouraged clarity and discouraged participants from using terms simply because those are the terms the interviewer used. Furthermore, three processes were included to validate the analysis of the data: consistency checks, member checking and peer debriefing.

Consistency Checks

Consistency checks were conducted by reviewing the transcripts of interviews to check for any discrepancies in the participants' responses. If inconsistencies were found, participants were to be asked to explain the inconsistencies. However, no inconsistencies were found in participants' transcripts.

Member Checking

Member checking is a process which provides a participant in the study the opportunity to review the transcriptions and conclusions drawn from his or her interview. Parent participants had the option to determine if they were properly represented in the data. Patton (2002) notes that researchers can learn a great deal about the accuracy,

completeness, fairness, and perceived validity of their data by having their participants react to what is described and concluded. In this study, participants were provided a reasonable opportunity to comment on the study data and conclusions. Participants were emailed a transcript of their interview and preliminary conclusions drawn by the researcher and asked to verify the transcript and the conclusions drawn. Of the twelve participants in the study, ten (83%) replied to the researcher's email asking them to verify their transcripts and preliminary conclusions. All participants noted that they agreed with the veracity of their transcripts and had no comments or issues with the preliminary conclusions. Only one participant offered a clarification and addition to the researcher's preliminary findings. She noted that she felt she was misunderstood on a point she made in her interview about differences between American and Indian parents and the importance they place on education. Another participant noted that while she felt the transcript was accurate and the analysis was correct, she felt she sounded more assimilated than she realized at the time of the interview.

Peer Debriefing

A peer debriefer reviewed the researcher's notes, analysis, and conclusions drawn in order to increase the validity of the research findings. The peer debriefer in this study is a researcher in the Anthropology department at the University of South Florida who has experience in the collection and analysis of qualitative data. This peer debriefer aided in ensuring that the study was not affected by researcher bias, preconceived notions, etc. The peer debriefer was instrumental in assisting the researcher in developing codes used for the study, establishing interrater reliability, and, in the early stages of theme analysis, assisting the researcher in detecting emerging themes in the data

and pointing out issues she believed it was important for the researcher to be aware of in analyzing the data.

Chapter Four

Results

The present study examined how mothers from a specific immigrant group (Asian Indians) engaged in their children's education and to what extent they drew on various forms of social and cultural capital to do so. Forms of capital examined in this study were drawn from the work of both Coleman (1988) and Bourdieu (1987). These forms are social norms, social networks, and embodied cultural capital. The study provided an in-depth examination of the *nature* of the forms of capital that a little-studied immigrant community, Asian Indian families, draw upon to support their children's education. This chapter reports participant demographic characteristics and the study findings. Findings are presented for each of the three research questions that guided the study with themes presented for each of the study questions.

Participant Demographic Characteristics

The participant sample was obtained using the purposeful sampling procedures and inclusion/exclusion criteria discussed in Chapter Three. The sample consisted of representatives (mothers) from 12 Asian Indian families from a West Central Florida . Data to be reported were obtained through an in-depth interview with a mother from each of these families.

Description of Families

Demographic characteristics of the participating families are reported in Table 1. The 12 families came from different areas of India including the south (Andhra Pradesh,

Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka), western India (i.e., Gujarat and Maharashtra) and the northeast (Assam). Based on Census data (U.S. Census, 2009), families in the study had household incomes that were far above the U.S. median household income in 2007 (\$50, 240). Seven of the families (58%) reported an annual household income above \$95, 000. Only one family reported an income of less than \$65, 000.

Table 1

Characteristics of Participant Families (N=12)

Characteristic	N	%
Annual Household Income		
Less than 64, 999	1	8
65, 000 – 74, 999	2	16
75, 000 – 84, 999	1	8
85, 000 – 95, 000	1	8
95, 000 - 104, 999	3	25
Above 105, 000	4	33
No. of School-Aged Children in Household		
1	3	25
2	9	75
Grade Levels of K-12 Children in Household (n=21)		
K-2 nd grade	3	14
3 rd -5 th grade	4	19
6 th -8 th grade	7	33
9 th -11 th grade	5	24
12th grade	2	10

The children of participating mothers ranged in age from 6 to 17 years, with a mean age of 12 years. Eleven of the children (52%) were boys and 10 (48%) were girls. More than half the participants' children (66%) were in middle or high school. Mothers reported that children were very active in a variety of activities within and outside the Indian community. Children's activities included tennis lessons, participating in community chess clubs and basketball leagues, and volunteering through a volunteer club. Cultural activities included: Indian classical dance (*Bharatnatyam*), Indian musical instruments (*mridangam*, Indian violin), performing in folk dances at the temple, participating in cultural associations specific to the region of India from which their parents came (e.g., Tamil Association), *Ballygokulam* (an association that teaches Hindu children about India's history and culture and Hinduism), and *Swadhyay* (a weekly group dedicated to discussing moral and philosophical issues raised by the *Bhagavad Gita*, an Indian holy text). Table 2 below reports the academic grades of the participants' children (based on the interviewees' reports) from the spring of 2009. All mothers' reported that children did very well academically. A few mothers noted that their children participated in academic competitions in the district (e.g., Math Bowl, Geography Bee) and had won academic awards (e.g., Tropicana speech award).

Table 2

Academic Grades of Participants' Children (Spring 2009) (N=23)

Subject	N	%
Math		
A	19	82
B	4	17
Reading/Language Arts		
A	21	91
B	11	47
Science		
A	20	86
B	3	13

Description of Interviewees

Table 3 provides a summary of selected characteristics of the interviewees. The average age of mothers in the sample was 40.9 years. The number of years mothers had lived in the U.S. ranged from 4 to 42 years, with a mean of 16.5 years. The number of years they had lived in their native country before immigrating to the United States ranged from one year to 32 years with a mean of 22.7 years. All of the mothers had at least a four-year college degree, four of them had Master's degrees and one had a professional degree. Eighty-three percent of the participants reported that their highest

educational level was completed in the U.S. Despite high levels of education, seven of the mothers were stay at home mothers.

Table 3

Characteristics of Interviewees (N=12)

Characteristic	N	%
Age (in years)		
31-40	5	41
41-50	7	58
Religion		
Hindu	11	91
Muslim	1	8
State of Origin		
Andhra Pradesh	4	33
Assam	1	8
Gujarat	1	8
Karnataka	1	8
Maharashtra	3	25
Tamil Nadu	2	16
Immigration Status		
Permanent Resident	2	91
U.S. Citizen	10	1
Number of Years Lived in U.S.		
1 – 5	1	8
6 – 10	1	8
11 – 15	4	33
16 – 20	4	33
21 and above	2	16
Number of Years Lived in India		
1 – 10	1	8
11 -20	1	8
21 – 30	9	75
30 – 40	1	8
Highest Education Level Attained		
Bachelor's degree	7	58
Master's degree	4	33
Professional degree (M.D., L.L.B)	1	8

Participant Descriptions

Each of the 12 mothers who participated in this study is described below.

Pseudonyms are used to protect the mothers' identities.

Anjali. Anjali is from the Tamil ethnic group, which originates in southern India, but was raised in western India. Anjali is very active in the Indian community, participating in fundraisers and cultural events for one of the local temples and one of the cultural associations. In addition, she indicated that her children participated in a variety of cultural activities in the city's Indian community.

Anumita. Anumita is from a small city in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. Anumita said that she is not a part of any cultural associations, but that she has a large group of friends from the Indian community and that her child participates in many cultural activities in the Indian community.

Chapala. Chapala is from Karnataka, a state in southern India. Chapala does not belong to any cultural associations and does most of her socializing with members of the Indian community by interacting with Indian families in her neighborhood. She indicated that her children participate in a cultural organization that teaches Indian children about Indian cultures and Hindu traditions.

Meenakshi. Meenakshi was one of the youngest mothers in the sample. She is from a large cosmopolitan city in the western coastal state of Maharashtra. Meenakshi is very involved in a cultural organization in the city relating to her home state and said her children participate in cultural activities related to this organization.

Neha. Neha is from Andhra Pradesh, a southern Indian state. Like Chapala, Neha indicated that she and her children participate in an organization that teaches them

about Indian culture. Sudha is not a member of any cultural associations but her friends were drawn from the Indian community.

Noor. Noor was the only Muslim member of the sample. She is from the southern state of Tamil Nadu. Noor reported that she was involved in her mosque, and engaged in a lot of social activities with other Muslim and non-Muslim women in the Indian community.

Radha. Radha is from the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. She indicated that she attends cultural functions in the Indian community as often as she can. Radha noted that her child participated in cultural activities in the Indian community.

Rani. Rani is from Assam, a state in northeastern India. Rani said that she does not participate in many cultural activities in the larger Indian community in her city, but did go to the temple for major holidays. However, her children did participate in some cultural activities in the Indian community.

Reshmi. Reshmi is from a large city in Maharashtra. Reshmi indicated that she is not a member of any cultural associations, but attends one of the Hindu temples in the city regularly. She also reported that her close friends are drawn from the Indian community. Her children participate in a variety of activities in the Indian community.

Roshni. Roshni is from a large cosmopolitan city in a southern state in India. Roshni stated that she attends cultural events in the Indian community and that her close friends are drawn from the Indian community. She also reported that her child does not participate in cultural activities in the Indian community, but attends them.

Sudha. Sudha is from Andhra Pradesh, a state in southern India. Sudha is not a member of any cultural associations, but her friendship group is composed of other

mothers in the Indian community. She indicated that her children participate in cultural activities in the Indian community, specifically music and dance performances for festivals.

Vidya. Vidya was born in a large cosmopolitan city in Maharashtra. She indicated that both she and her husband are very involved in the Indian community in the city where they currently reside. She indicated that her child is also very involved in arts activities in the Indian community.

Summary of Participants

Overall, the sample was composed of Hindu families, with the exception of one Muslim family. Most of the participants in the study reported that they had lived in the U.S for several years but retained very close ties to India, often returning once a year or every two years to visit family. Many of the mothers in the sample were stay-at-home mothers and indicated that they stayed at home in order to be there for their children. A few mothers were members of local Indian associations, but most were not. Many participated to some degree in cultural events in the community, most often through attendance at the temple for festivals. Most of the participants reported that their children participated in cultural activities in the community (e.g., performing in folk dances, taking classical dance classes, and participating in *Ballygokulam* and *Swadhyay*). Most participants had not experienced the K-12 or post-secondary education systems as students in the U.S. Interviewees had children at varying grade levels; but on average, their children were high school and middle-school aged.

Interview data obtained in this study were transcribed and analyzed relative to the three questions presented below. Patterns and trends are discussed below; select verbatim

comments are included to illustrate specific beliefs or experiences identified in the analyses of the interview data.

Question 1: What Role does Embodied Cultural Capital Play in Asian Indian Mothers' Engagement in Their Children's Education?

Bourdieu described embodied capital as residing in persons, that is, it rests in “culture and cultivation” (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 48). Further, he argued that embodied capital is integrated into a person, and is his *habitus*, his way of approaching the world, including schooling and education. Thus this question examines the interviewees' reports about their way of approaching schooling and education of their children as reflected in their beliefs and values about education and the origins of these beliefs. Analysis revealed that the beliefs about education that interviewees articulated reflected beliefs held by the larger Indian community. Furthermore, mothers' responses about their activities connected to their children's schooling are examined to further illuminate the role embodied capital played in the mothers' engagement in their children's education. Analysis of interviewee responses in this area reveals that the mothers in the study revered education, and that they felt it held more importance in their children's lives than anything else. Mothers believed that *education ensures financial security* and to a lesser extent that *education is dependable* and that *education makes you a better person*. Mothers attributed their veneration of education to various sources, indicating that it was influenced by aspects of contemporary *Indian society*, the *struggle against colonialism*, and to a lesser extent, *indigenous educational traditions*.

Asked about their beliefs about their roles in their children's education as well as beliefs in the Indian community about the role of parents in their children's education,

mothers' responses centered on being *active participants* in their children's education. Examination of mothers' responses about activities connected to their children's education in which they engaged indicated that, in practice, being an active participant meant *academic supplementing, school-based involvement, and frequent communication with teachers*. In particular, mothers reported that they and sometimes their husbands devoted large amounts of time to supplementing their children's elementary school curriculum. The engagement in academic supplementing appeared to stem from dissatisfaction with the American curriculum and mothers' belief that it was important for children's academic success to engage in small amounts of extra academic work on a daily basis and during the summers.

Another aspect of mothers' beliefs about the role they should play in their children's education was the idea that, for Indian mothers, *staying at home is important* in order to best support children's education and development. Many of the mothers discussed this as a value present in the Indian community as well as a value to which they themselves subscribed.

Beliefs about the Value of Education

Examination of the interviewee responses regarding the value of education reveals a group of women who, without exception, deeply valued education, noting that it is the key to security and achieving success in life. Three themes emerged from their discussion about their beliefs about the value of education. Endorsement rates for these themes are reported in Table 4. All the mothers interviewed believed *education ensures financial security*, that it will provide for their children's future; this seemed to stem partly from their socioeconomic background as middle class families in both India and the U.S., who

did not have large amounts of land or money to leave their children. Anjali’s words captured the mothers’ perspective well in this regard; she described education as “the only wealth you can give your children”. Mothers (five) also expressed the belief that *education is dependable*, that it is a form of security that cannot be taken from you. A number of mothers (five) also expressed the belief that *education makes you a better person*.

Table 4

Themes from Beliefs about the Value of Education

Themes	Endorsement Rate
Education ensures financial security	100%
Education is dependable	50%
Education makes you a better person	41%

n = 12

Education ensures financial security. Mothers noted that education was the key to their children’s future financial security, that it would provide a decent standard of living for them or a “good life” as expressed in Chapala’s words:

Education, that will be the first priority, more than anything else because it’s all about money. You get your education, you can live a decent life. It ultimately just comes down to money.

Radha indicated that education helps you to earn a living and is a more dependable way of earning a living than other methods. She said:

If you want to do anything with your life you need money and that's just the bottom line and if you need to make that money you need to be educated. That's the only thing that's going to get you there.

Vidya explicitly expressed the belief that education equals security:

I strongly believe that you need an education. It's security, that's all it is....when you have a good education you have a good job, especially in the market when things are getting tougher; the more equipped you are, hopefully, the more successful you'll be.

Anjali expressed the view that as middle class families, education was the only form of wealth you can give your children. She said, "Education is the most important thing in life because it's the only wealth that you can give your children." Anumita stated, "I tell my...kids you have to study; you don't have any property."

Education is dependable. Mothers also described education as something you could always depend on, that no one could take it away. They described it as something you could always fall back on in difficult circumstances, something that could not be lost or taken away like money. Reshmi noted that she tells her children education confers knowledge which is something no one can take away. She said, "I am telling my kids always that knowledge has so much power...this is the only one thing that nobody can take from you. This always remains in you."

Radha described her view that there were other careers, like those in entertainment that could provide a good living but that they are not secure. She said, "...you can be like Elvis Presley but those are all professions which go up and down. It's not there for life, whereas if you're educated, that stays with you for the rest of your life."

Anjali indicated that her education is a form of security no one can take away from her. She stated:

That is one thing that nobody can take away from me. You might lose money, you might not be in a good state of health but education and knowledge, it goes with you. It's very, very, very important.

Chapala noted that education is something you can rely on in any circumstances and it helps to provide a decent life for future generations. She stated, "If you want a decent life, you want a good life for your children, for your grandchildren...the one thing you can fall back on is education, no matter what happens and what situation you're in.

Education makes you a better person. Although the mothers in the study believed that education was important to their children's future material security, five of them also expressed the belief that education makes you a better person, whether because it broadened your exposure to the world or taught you to distinguish between right and wrong. Reshmi expressed the belief that, "If they [children] have a good education they can be good human being[s] too."

Radha expressed the hope that her daughter would become a good person because education teaches you values. She said:

And I hope that she will be a good person because those are the things that education...teaches. [It] teaches you values...besides giving you knowledge, it gives you an ability to differentiate between what's right and what's wrong.

Roshni noted that education helps to teach children to make the right choices. She said, "I believe that education is really important...kids have to be educated to be

able to make right and wrong choices in life. It helps them make those decisions better and it helps them get social skills.”

Origins of Beliefs About the Value of Education

Interviewees were asked about where they derived their beliefs about education as well as the sources from which they believed the emphasis on education in the Indian community derived. Four themes emerged from their discussion: *parental encouragement and support*, *Indian society*, and the *struggle against colonialism*. Endorsement rates for these themes are reported in Table 5. Interviewees most often noted that they derived their beliefs about the value of education from the *parental encouragement and support* they had received through their lives for the pursuit of education, were influenced by particular features of *Indian society*, and the *struggle against colonialism*. Though it was not discussed by a majority of participants it is important to note that two mothers also expressed the belief that *indigenous educational tradition* also influenced their beliefs and beliefs in the larger Indian society about education.

Table 5

Origins of Beliefs about the Value of Education

Themes	Endorsement Rate
Parental support and encouragement	100%
Indian society	41%
Struggle against colonialism	33%

n = 12

Parental encouragement and support. All of the mothers reported that their beliefs about the value of education stemmed partly from their families. Some told how their parents sacrificed so they could be educated. Chapala noted that her family was a middle class family that emphasized educational attainment:

I am from a very middle class family and it was all about struggling and learning, and struggling and learning, and getting good grades. And you know, don't stop at just one degree. You don't want to be...those typical girls who stop at just a degree or high school and then just get married and have children and settle down. Always study higher and higher.

Reshmi expressed her belief that the emphasis on education in her family was handed down from generation to generation. She explained that, historically, her family worked the land and that each generation had made sacrifices in order for the next generation to transition from working the land to working in a profession:

Maybe this is from generation to generation because my father's father my [grandfather], we are [from a caste group that works the land] so we have land...we were surviving from that. But he [my grandfather] didn't want his son to be doing the same thing. He wanted to make sure his son went to college, so from then my dad learned to make sure [his children] went to college. Now I am thinking I want to make sure [of that]...so it's generation to generation.

Asked from where she derived her beliefs about education, Neha said that her parents were the main source. She noted that her father did not have a lot of education but

worked very hard to ensure that she and her brothers would be able to obtain college degrees:

My dad worked so hard, he has his own business, he did everything independently. He worked so hard to get the house, to start his business. He did maybe 10 [10th grade], stopped at that. I have three brothers, he didn't want me or my brothers involved in the business because he knows how hard it is. So he wanted to educate us very well so he earned a lot of money and he took some credits [loans] from outside. So he suffered a lot with that, the interest and everything.

Asked if her father emphasized her education less since she was a girl, Neha stated that her father had actually wanted very badly for her to pursue an engineering degree. However, pursuing an engineering degree would have required her to study away from home and live in a hostel and she was reluctant to do that, so she pursued a degree in another area instead.

Indian society. According to some of the mothers (five), another important source of the strong emphasis on education was the nature of Indian society. Interviewees attributed the strong emphasis on education to the particular combination of circumstances that characterize India, that is overpopulation, the absolute necessity for education to a good standard of living in India, and the high level of competition for a limited number of places at good schools, all of which combined to shape the need for children to achieve at very high levels, academically. Asked about why she thought there was a strong emphasis on education in Indian society, Meenakshi said:

Basically I think because [India's] still a developing country. Places like U.S. and Australia, they're developed countries, so people already are getting things; they take it for granted. They'll get a house, they'll get a car. But in India people are still getting there, so if you don't have [an] education you're not going to get a good job and have a good life. I think that's basically the underlying thought of everybody, if you educate the kids we can come abroad and work here. We have the skill set so obviously you'll get that kind of money. In India, anybody can survive, even if you're not educated. But then the kind of life you'll get is totally different than if you're educated.

Asked about the strong emphasis on education in Indian society, Chapala attributed it to, "the living conditions, the job prospects...all the elite are very well educated." Vidya, who discussed the long history of indigenous educational traditions in India, also noted that overpopulation in India had strengthened the focus on education. She said, "Over time I guess the population was so high and there was so much competitiveness that...if you wanted to succeed, you needed to be more educated than the next person." Sudha noted that the high level of competition in India around academics means that if she lived there, she would have to be more aggressive about her children's education:

Because there is so much competition there [in India], everybody will get 100 out of 100. [And] if somebody is getting a little less than 100 they don't get seats in good schools. So there we'd be pushing a lot but here [it's] calm and easy going.

Many of the mothers interviewed described their childhood in India as including rigorous study schedules that included long days of school with extra tuitions, out of school academic lessons that many Indian students, particularly those from middle class families take to prepare for the rigorous college entrance examinations in India. However, they did not describe these study schedules in negative or critical terms; instead, they appeared to believe that these schedules were quite normal and acceptable for children. Neha, for instance, described her rigorous school schedule that included the extra tuitions that her parents paid for, and how during examination periods her parents woke her and her siblings early in the morning to study:

Tutions, yes, morning we'd go [at] eight o'clock [at night] and we'd come back at five or six o'clock. Again we'd go to tuitions; we came back at eight. So we'd do homework and tuitions. Exam times they made us wake up at five o'clock, four o'clock, early morning; they'd sit with us, make us read for two hours, and we'd go to school.

Meenakshi contrasted her children's school experience to her own:

We didn't have summers like these because we already had more studies than kids here. These kids don't even study 50% of what we used to study in India. India is totally different...we had tests right from kindergarten, and proper tests, not just fun tests. We were doing addition and subtraction in kindergarten. In first grade we were doing multiplication tables...they're big on math and science there.

Struggle against colonialism. Four of the mothers interviewed discussed the struggle against colonialism as a significant contributor to the strong emphasis on

education in Indian society. The mothers stated that the lesson of independence for Indians was that if you were educated you could successfully advocate for your rights. Roshni expressed her belief that prior to independence, India had been, "...more of the underdog, male-oriented, uneducated society" and change came about partly because of education and that, "...what our generation of kids at least realized [is] that education is what is important." Noor described her view about what Indians learned about the value of education from their struggle for independence:

The Indian attitude [is], they think that education is more important. The reason is [that] India had slavery before...you know the British came and rural Indians, they were not educated, they were not able to defend themselves at that time. When the educated people came like Mahatma Gandhi and other people, they fought for their country so then the [education] came. Until then you know how India was, it was ruled by the British, and it was behind. So, from that time it's an Indian mentality that you have to get educated...That is the main reason why people always think, "We need to get educated, otherwise people will cheat us."

Radha said she felt that the struggle against colonialism taught Indians that they had to become educated so they could be equal to the colonizers, that education was the great equalizer that would increase one's status regardless of skin color.

You know [for] generations...I think...we were a very repressed and suppressed community from...British slavery and we always thought that just because the Britisher [*sic*] knows how to speak English and he's fair-skinned, that's what we need to achieve. So most of us even if you're a

little bit darker skinned and you don't speak the language you're...one rung lower. But if you are dark skinned and you're a professor then people look up to you and the way [you] look sort of goes out of the picture. "Wow, he's so good and he speaks so well." So, I think over the years parents started telling their children if you can read the book and speak like your average white *sahib* [Hindi word meaning sir, often used during colonial times to describe British males] then you're good. So then gradually that became [that] education was the way to go.

She went on to note that Mahatma Gandhi by virtue of having gone abroad and studied was able to meet the colonizers on an equal basis and demand India's independence.

We recognize that when Mahatma Gandhi went abroad and studied and came back and he was a lawyer, everybody looked up to him because he could speak well and he could sit at the same table and talk to his average white counterpart and say, "This is what I want and this is what I think we should do." So everybody realized that if you could go to college and get yourself to that level where you could speak that way, then people would respect you.

Indigenous educational traditions. Two of the Hindu mothers in the sample, Radha and Vidya, expressed the view that they felt the *Gurukul* tradition in India, which was a system of education dating back thousands of years and derived from the Vedic scriptures (ancient Sanskrit writings that are foundational to Hinduism), had shaped the Indian reverence for education. Vidya had recently begun to study Indian educational

traditions and expressed that she felt that the emphasis on education in Indian society originated in ancient traditions described in the Vedic scriptures. She said:

If you go back thousands of years, it goes back to the Hindu scriptures, the *Vedas*, where education is extremely important. And throughout it constantly says education and learning are a very, very important part of the Hindu culture and I'm talking about 4000 years ago or so, in that range. Every child was expected to go and live at a *guru's* [teacher's] house. The typical translation for the word *guru* is one who dispels darkness. Every child, whether male or female, was expected to go and stay with their teacher for a period of several years and this was considered their schooling. This was an essential part of life so it's been handed down for 4000, 5000, maybe even more years.

Radha described her understanding of the *Gurukul* tradition, noting that it has probably shaped the Indian perception of teachers as very esteemed figures. She said:

Well, the Hindu religion and scriptures, a lot of it was passed on by word of mouth and a lot of places [had] what we call the *Gurukul* system, basically where the child lived with the teacher. [Traditionally the child] did everything for the teacher, starting from cooking and cleaning. And they did that for the teacher and in return the teacher taught them...and in return they cleaned up and took care of the *guru's* needs....You know, in our country the teacher is almost akin to god, you learn from them and you give back to them what you can. In India you always stand up and talk to

the teacher. You can't say, "Hey, I've got a question," and things like that.

All of the mothers were asked if they received any messages about education from their religion. Most mothers interviewed did not believe that this strong emphasis on education came from their religious beliefs. The mothers frankly related to the interviewer that they were not sure what their religion taught about education. Noor noted that she was not sure what the Koran taught about education because she was not that knowledgeable about what it said. She said, "See I read [the] Koran, but I do not know the full meaning of [the] Koran...I myself don't know what exactly is there in [the] Koran, whether it's telling anything about education or not."

Reshmi said that she believed religion taught about morals and values and didn't really address education. She said, "In religion, they are teaching us about religious [things]; they don't teach us about education. They teach us about morals, what kind of morals you should have in life."

Beliefs About Parent Role

Interviewees were asked about what they believed a parent's role in their children's education should be as well as what they perceived the belief to be in the larger Indian community with regard to what a parent's role should be. Two major themes and three subthemes emerged from their responses. (Themes and subthemes for the beliefs about the parent role and corresponding endorsement rates are shown in Table 6.). The first theme that emerged in this area was *active participants*, with the subthemes of *academic supplementing*, *school-based involvement*, and *frequent communication with teachers*. The second theme that emerged was the *importance of staying home*. Given

the mothers' belief that education was critical to ensuring their children's futures, it is perhaps not surprising that almost all the mothers stated that it was their belief that parents should be very involved in their children's education, engaging in activities like constant monitoring of their children's progress, and helping them with academic areas in which they are weak. Thus, all mothers believed they should be *active participants* in their children's education. The mothers reported that the belief about being an active participant in their children's education was one that was widely held by most Indian parents. Analysis of interviewees' responses about their role beliefs as well as the activities in which they engaged to support their children's education indicate that, for the mothers, being an active participant was characterized by three subthemes (*academic supplementing, school-based involvement* (e.g., PTA, volunteering in the classroom, etc.) and *frequent communication with teachers*).

A number of interviewees (seven) in the study also explicitly stated that they believed that for mothers to play an active role in their children's education, *staying at home is important*. The mothers stated that staying home allows them to, among other things, give their children a strong foundation in life and work with them on academic concepts. As was the case for mothers' beliefs about the need to play an active role in their children's education, mothers reported that beliefs about the importance of mothers staying home were widely held in the Indian community at large. Finally, two mothers disagreed with what form parents' participation in their children's education should take. This is discussed below.

Table 6

Themes from Beliefs about Parent Role

Themes	Endorsement Rate
Active participants	100%
Academic supplementing	91%
School-based involvement	91%
Frequent communication with Teachers	83%
Importance of staying home	58%

n = 12

Active participants. Asked about the role they believed they should play in their children’s education, all mothers expressed the belief that parents should play a very active role. Anjali discussed her belief that parents should be very involved and that, for her, this meant being aware of how a child was performing in school and if that child had any difficulties, it was necessary for the parent to find a way to address these difficulties. She said:

[Parents] have to be very involved, very involved. Try to find out what is the weakness of their child. If a child is struggling in a particular subject, try to make him more comfortable by get[ting] him extra help.

Sudha noted that she felt it is her responsibility to closely monitor how her children are doing with their school work. She said, “I have to...see what they’re doing, what they’re not doing....If I sit and watch TV and they’re doing their own thing, they might not finish all their work and they’ll get bad grades.”

Roshni said that she feels parents should care and be involved:

In general, I think parents should care more, listen more, because sometimes it's not just the ability to study but there are some other factors that are bothering them. And if parents can help in solving those other issues, the children can concentrate on education and go forward.

Noor explained how she wanted her children to achieve at a high level so she sat and worked with them on academic concepts when they were young. She said, "I want my kids always to be the best. I want my kids to learn everything and be good in everything, always first. That's the reason I always sat and taught them."

Mothers' beliefs about playing an active role in their children's education appeared to be reflected in their activities in three particular areas, *academic supplementing*, *school-based involvement*, and *frequent communication with teachers*.

Academic supplementing. Examination of mothers' responses about the kinds of activities in which they engaged to support their children's education showed that almost all of them engaged in extensive amounts of *academic supplementing*, particularly of the elementary school curriculum, either by using tutoring services like Kumon or developing their own academic materials. Interestingly, this academic supplementing appeared to be driven largely by their perceptions of the American elementary school curriculum as lacking academic rigor as well as their belief that children's minds benefit from small amounts of extra academic work on a daily basis.

Reasons for Academic Supplementing

Asked if their mothers had spent time engaged in academic supplementing with them as children in India, most of the mothers in the sample said they had not. They stated that they engaged in this supplementing because of perceptions they held about the

American elementary school curriculum, that it wasted valuable learning time and failed to teach important material. Many mothers (8 of the mothers interviewed) shared the opinion that the American elementary school curriculum failed to adequately prepare students for the sudden “jump” in the curriculum that takes place on transition to middle school and then high school. Anjali, for instance, explained that many Indian parents supplemented their children’s American elementary education at home because much valuable learning time was wasted. In her opinion, because of this, Indian children, in comparison to some American children, struggled less with the curriculum in middle and high school. She explained:

Up to the elementary level or I would say even the middle school level, the standard of education compared to India is very, very poor and what is happening is, I’m talking about Florida, they are judging all the children at the same level and they feel that these children should not be bothered with more academic stuff because they won’t be able to handle it...I cannot imagine a fifth grader coming home...saying that he hardly has any homework or he just has five minutes of work. So much time is wasted at the elementary level. Middle school they are given a little bit and then suddenly in high school everything...gets very intense. But what happens is, Indian kids, we educate them at home because hardly anything is done in school, so Indian kids are able to handle the pressure of middle and high school much better compared to the others, and then going on to college, the college drop out rates also are much lower for Asian kids. That is what I have noticed.

Reshmi shared the view that a lot of time was wasted in elementary school in the U.S., and the curriculum suddenly became much more difficult in high school, resulting in America's problems with a high drop out rate. She said:

In...American elementary school[s] they don't do anything, then in middle school they do little bit, and then in high school they have so much. That's why they have so many drop outs in high school because...[kids] think they can't manage it; that's why they don't go to college. I say [the] fundamental base should be stronger then they [wouldn't] have a problem. But in elementary they play too much; then suddenly everything comes so fast [and] they can't grasp so much. That's why kids are going to school; they want to learn something, so you shouldn't feel like they will be stressed out because at a young age their brain is working very well, they can learn however much you give them because they have so much grasping power. So we shouldn't think, "Oh, this is their playing time"... we should teach [them].

Chapala expressed her view that children do little in elementary school and then the curriculum increases dramatically in middle school, saying:

Here...there's nothing at all for elementary and then all of a sudden there's this big push that you get in middle school. I don't know how the kids deal with it. You know it has to be gradual...I think that the kids at this age, elementary school are like sponges they absorb a lot more so you need to give them more and more. You don't have to wait for them to play...and then thrust everything else in their faces when they come to

middle school. They're in absolute shock...you've been playing all this while and then suddenly it's like study, study, study, study. I don't think that works.

Rani, who worked as an elementary school teacher, shared her view that there were certain really important concepts (e.g., obtaining fluency in basic math facts) and subjects (e.g., math and science) that were not focused on enough in the elementary school curriculum. She stated that she felt that elementary schools used too much valuable instructional time on teaching about things like holidays:

In India we had things like rote memorization of multiplication tables, for instance. After you understood the concept, you were expected to learn them. Whereas, over here I find that the emphasis is not there....And what I find [is] every holiday is celebrated in school....It takes time away from teaching core courses.

Noor's discussion of how she supplemented her son's school work reflects her dissatisfaction with the elementary curriculum as well as a desire to have her sons be more advanced academically. She said:

I was not satisfied with what they were doing so I always made them do more at home...I used to get books from Barnes & Noble, a grade ahead of what they were doing and make them practice at home. So always I would teach them at home one grade ahead. Or, I'd go to math.com or something like that and print out a lot of worksheets and make them do at home so that they were always ahead one grade of whatever they were

doing. So that way when they go[t] to middle school they [were] already ahead, they [were] in advanced honors.

Mothers also articulated that it benefited their children's cognitive development if they were engaged in some form of daily academic work in addition to school and that during the summers it was particularly important that children continue to learn.

Neha described her husband's beliefs on this topic. She said, "My husband gives more importance to studies....It's his belief that every day they [our children] have to spend some time, at least two hours, studying so they won't be last in [their] subjects. Anumita was asked why she thought that it was important for her children to, on a daily basis, do small amounts of academic work in addition to what they did in school. She explained that she felt that studying is a habit that must be developed over time. She said, "If you want them to do well in their education, they have to slowly develop that habit of how to study."

Sudha articulated that she and her husband gave her children writing and math to practice in the summer because they felt they would forget what they learned in school if they didn't do some practice in the summer. She said, "We give them some writing or some math. Otherwise they'll just forget everything. Maybe one day in a week they have to do some work, at least.

Meenakshi discussed the importance of her children engaging in academic work during the summer, saying that the brain gets "slack" when, as in the summers, children take too long a break from studying. She said:

Because if you don't study then the brain gets in [a] slack mode and then when school starts by the time your brain awakens it's already three

months past. I think it's important that you keep your brain occupied, learn something new.

A couple of mothers also stated that they supplemented their children's school work in order that their children stay one step ahead of the curriculum. Roshni, for instance, noted that she supplemented her son's schoolwork using books one grade higher so that he would have confidence in the material.

Forms of Academic Supplementing

All but one mother interviewed engaged in supplementing their children's school curriculum, particularly at the elementary level. Academic supplementing took various forms including outside tutoring services and materials mothers (and in some cases their husbands) found online or developed themselves. Many of the mothers in the sample utilized Kumon (a tutoring approach originally developed for math by a Japanese math teacher and very popular among Asian American parents) at one point or another. Meenakshi noted that, previously in the summers, her son was enrolled in Kumon, even though he disliked it. She said:

Take Kumon, for example,....everyday they have to do those sheets and so they don't do anything hard for summer, but they have to do it [the Kumon worksheets] but my son he really hates it....That's why I reduce the papers, like one or two papers each day, still he doesn't like it.

Anumita noted that she sent her son to Kumon to help build his concentration. She said:

K___ went to Kumon so when he was small for a lack of concentration so [he went] to bring up his concentration. He did it for five years. Later, when he was in seventh grade, he stopped.

Noor noted that she didn't feel Kumon was necessary if parents were willing to sit and teach their children. She said:

[Indian parents] take their kids to different classes like Kumon but I didn't take them [her children]. I just taught them at home. If you sit with your child and teach them, that's more than enough; all you need to do is spend some time with the kids, at least one hour a day.

Chapala discussed how she searched the Internet and used workbooks she purchased and created her own math problems to supplement what her children learned in school. She said:

I find a lot of resources on the computer...I get a lot of extra books. My husband and I, we get books from Sam's Club, workbooks. I review with them [her children]...and if I know [they're] struggling with a concept, I create my own problems.

Radha noted that her child had an academic program during the summer. She said she took advantage of one of the State of Florida's school choice options, Florida Virtual School (FLVS) to ensure that her child engaged in some form of academic work during the summer. She said:

We are fairly strict with her. She's got a summer program for education even while she's on summer break she needs to do an hour or couple of hours of [work] before she does anything else. She [now] does Florida Virtual School on the computer so that's a couple hours every morning.

Neha noted that, while her child spends quite a bit of time playing in the summers each day, he must spend a little time learning about a topic her husband selects. She explained:

In the summer, my husband gives him a topic he has to learn in one week, like every day a little bit....That's where my son learned about capitals; in one summer he learned about all the capitals, India and all the world capitals. And the next summer he learned about president's names and the biograph[ies] of presidents. So, that's how he spends [his] time, two hours [each day] he spends on studies. The remaining time he can play a game cube or whatever.

Anjali noted that once Indian parents realized that the standard of education was not what it had been in India, they enrolled their children in a multitude of academic activities (e.g., spelling bee classes, Kumon) to help their development. She said:

We try to do after school educational activities like sending them for *Vidyalaya* [Sanskrit word meaning "place of learning"] and Sunday school and we have geography bees, national spelling bee classes on the weekends for a group of kids and...you know they don't have to go for the competitions and win, those things I don't believe in. But at least get educated and use your time more wisely.

The mothers reported that some members of the Indian community had developed two sets of academic classes that it offered to students, one was an SAT preparation class offered on Saturdays at a local state university. The other was more extensive, a series of academic classes held at the largest Hindu temple in the city. These classes were called

Vidyalaya and included English and math classes for elementary, middle, and high school students. Anjali described them thus:

There are a couple of volunteers, professionals, a few of them are doctors, a few of them are software engineers; some are teachers. They all get together and they...have classes from first grade to twelfth grade. A few of the university professors are also involved [in] training kids for SATs. And they all meet every Sunday from 9-1 and then at one o'clock they have a potluck lunch.

The researcher reviewed the website of the Hindu temple to which Anjali referred and found that the *Vidyalaya* classes Anjali described did exist.

Interestingly, the only mother who had utilized these classes for her children was Anjali. All of the mothers were aware of these resources, but none had yet utilized them. Radha said that she planned to enroll her child in these classes when she entered 8th grade. Meenakshi said that she felt she did enough with her children and that those classes were for working parents. She said, "I do enough, I think that's...more for the parents who don't have time to get involved with the kids, working parents...but since I'm doing so much with my kids I don't want them studying on the weekends."

With regard to academic supplementing, it is important to highlight the views of Vidya. She was a notable exception to the other mothers in the sample. She frankly stated that she did not believe in supplementing what the school was teaching and that children could do well without any academic supplementing. She shared that she felt Indian parents were "pushy" and "competitive" for supplementing their children's

education. In response to a question about whether she supplemented her daughter's school curriculum with outside material, she said:

No, I'm opposed to doing those kinds of things. I find Indian parents to be very competitive and pushy. In the end, the kids turn out just fine. I think just because the kids aren't doing one hundred problems of multiplication every five minutes like the kids' parents did in India doesn't mean that [it's the] wrong method of education. And I think half of the parents have that idea that it's [teaching in American schools] the wrong method of education, that the only way to go is IB. It's a matter of personal opinion. I think you go through the school system; you follow what they say and if you want to do something extra, do it. But it's not like just because you don't do it you're stupid.

School-based involvement. As part of their active participation in their children's education, 11 of the mothers in the study reported that they engaged in various forms of school-based involvement. However, with regard to PTA (Parent Teacher Association) membership, only three mothers in the sample reported that they were members. Anjali was a member and paid dues, but did not attend meetings. Rani was extensively involved in her children's school when they were young and she was a member of the PTA. She noted that she chose to get involved because she thought it was important to learn more about the American school system. Interestingly, Rani's school-based involvement eventually led her to her present career as a teacher. She said:

After they [her children] were born, when they started going to school, I felt the need to learn more, because this was very important to me. So,

because it was so important to me and they were going to school and I didn't know anything about the system, I went and volunteered. I was a volunteer parent since my daughter was in kindergarten. I was a PTA member, did everything that PTA does and got to know the system very well. And after that, the principal of the school I was in, she said, "Well, why don't you go into it?"....That's how I became a teacher.

Reshmi stated that she had wanted to join the PTA but that she was afraid she would not be able to contribute in the way that was expected. She said:

I didn't go in the PTA...because I didn't know if I could do it....
Whatever I do I like to give 100 percent, I like to be my best. I was thinking I might not meet their expectation because I am not raised here. I don't know what I have to do. So that's why I never went into it. I will go to a meeting or something but still I don't know what they do.

All of the mothers in the sample, with the exception of Anumita reported that they engaged in some kind of school-based involvement. This consisted of volunteering wherever they were needed, like helping students with math as in Reshmi's case. Reshmi noted that when she first volunteered in her children's school she could only help with math because of the language barrier. She said:

In the beginning...they put me in the front desk and I was teaching whoever had a problem with math because that was the only thing I could teach because of my language barrier.

Mothers engaged in various activities including volunteering in the classroom, as in the case of Sudha who said, "I used to go and help with them, with the kids' homework

and Friday folders.” Roshni noted that she replaced a sick member of the cafeteria staff for a few hours a day for a few months, while Meenakshi’s applied the skills she previously used in her career to help out in the school’s media center.

While mothers who stayed home spent more time engaged in school-based activities, even those who worked indicated that they still engaged in school-based forms of involvement. Roshni noted that when she was working, she made arrangements with her supervisor to take time off so she could be involved in her child’s school. She said, “Even when I worked, it was a matter of discussing with my manager, taking a couple of hours off, doing it and then coming back and finishing my work.”

Radha, who works in the medical field, engaged in the least amount of school-based involvement, probably due to the nature of her employment. When asked about the types of school-based activities in which she engaged, Radha indicated that she would have liked to be more involved in her child’s school and that she did what she could. She stated:

Not much at all. I would love to, but I don’t have the time for that basically. I try to. The most I do for PTA is buy cupcakes and [donate] them. A couple of times I’ve been to the school and talked to students [for the] Great American Teach-In about my profession, showing pictures and stuff.

Half of the mothers interviewed indicated that they found it important to help out at the school to monitor what was happening. Neha, expressed this view: “I like to help...I like to volunteer there...when you volunteer also you know what your kids are doing, what’s going on in the school”. Chapala supported this sentiment; her comments

reflect her belief that by being present at the schools she could protect her children from bullying by monitoring their interactions with other children and conveying to the other children that she was a parent they couldn't "mess" with. She said:

Every now and then, I go and help out with the classroom...if there's something going on in the media center I pitch in for that...Once in a while I go to the cafeteria just [to] check on how they're doing...I want the other kids to know that I am there for the children and they can't mess with me, so that's a reason I want to go there...and then I want to see what [they're] doing [at] lunchtime, whether [they're] really eating or how [they're] interacting with the rest of the class.

In contrast to many of the other mothers, Vidya disagreed with the idea of monitoring what the school was doing. Vidya did engage in school-based involvement, but not to monitor the school. She articulated that she felt some Indian parents engaged in "overkill" and that a school system existed and one should let the teachers do their jobs. Asked how important she felt school-based involvement was, she said:

You know I think it's important to some extent but I think that overkill also is a problem. I've seen some Indian parents who literally go and stand behind the teacher to ensure that the teacher is doing things right. I think that's not right. I think you get involved, you be nice, you go and talk to the teacher once in a while, something has to be done, okay do it; but I don't think you need to do anything more than that. I mean they know what they're doing. There's an educational system, there are

teachers, you get involved to help, but you don't get involved to be a nuisance.

Anumita was the exception to the other mothers with regard to engagement in school-based involvement. Originally, Anumita didn't pursue this form of involvement because she had a young child at home, but as time went on, she didn't find it necessary. She noted that while she hears from other parents that their children ask them to come and volunteer or go on field trips, her children have never asked and she's never done it. She said:

No, I don't volunteer. I don't go on the field trips. My son even today doesn't ask. Some children they'll ask, "Mom, can you come with me, please Mom can you volunteer?" My kids don't ask. I'll ask, "Do you want me to come?" They'll say, "No, that's fine." Both of them. I didn't go with both of them on any field trips. They don't ask.

Frequent communication with teachers. Almost all mothers (10) in the study articulated that they constantly communicated with their children's teachers, usually to monitor their children's academic and behavioral progress. In their communications with teachers, mothers appeared to be focused on learning about any areas of academic weakness or problem behaviors so they could act quickly to address these issues.

Reshmi described the kinds of things she talks about with her children's teachers. She said:

...if they are doing the right thing, if they are doing good in class, if I have to do something more at home. Also if they are participating in everything and if they are in trouble or are they talking in class."

Sudha noted that she did not wait for progress reports to communicate with her children's middle school teachers, but that she contacted them to check on, "...how the kids behave in school, what kind of books they'll read, what they'll do."

Asked what types of issues she typically talks to her child's teachers about, Anjali said she talks to teachers to find out if there are any areas in which her son is struggling so that she can get him the help needed. She said:

If there are any issues, like if he's weak in any particular subject, let's say writing. Then I communicate to the teacher and find out how we can help him excel or at least be more comfortable in writing. So those types of issues. Other than that if there are any behavior issues and the teacher needs to talk to me then I assure her that, you know, I will make sure that those issues are taken care of at home.

It is important to note that not all the mothers interviewed endorsed frequent communication with teachers. Two of the mothers in the sample frankly reported that they rarely, if ever, contacted their children's teachers. Vidya said that she did not use the school district's online system to monitor her child's grades as she trusted her child. Moreover, asked if she ever contacted her child's teachers to check up on progress, Vidya said that she did not do so. She explained that she felt that the teachers knew their work and that she did not need to constantly check in with them. In addition, since her child had always done well in school and she said she had never felt she needed to contact the teachers.

They are the teachers; they know what they're doing. If she had a problem...if she was working and she was not getting good grades...I may

call the teacher to find out, “Hey, can you tell me why this is going on, what she needs to do to improve?” But we haven’t had that situation and I don’t see the purpose of questioning a teacher because they’re trained, they’re in that position for a reason.

Anumita, the mother who shared that she had never engaged in any form of school-based involvement, frankly expressed that she had very little contact with her children’s teachers. She noted that she had gone to the mandatory parent-teacher conferences at the elementary level, but that since they were not mandatory at the middle and high school levels, the only event she had attended thus far was the open house at the beginning of the year. She also explained that her children were doing well academically. She said:

Until now, I’ve never even been to school with my daughter. Parent teacher conference[s] at the elementary school, you have to go, but at the middle school and high school you don’t have to go. So I don’t [have] contact with the teachers. I met the teachers for the open house, the school opening, that’s when I went to meet the teachers, that’s it. They’re fine, they get A grades and study, study and recently one got an award.

Importance of staying home. In addition to their beliefs about being active participants in their children’s education, some of the mothers (seven) clearly expressed the view that staying home is an important part of the role mothers play in their children’s education and development. Mothers articulated that they felt that by staying home they could focus on their children when they were young and give them a strong educational foundation. This was consonant with the mothers’ beliefs about the importance of education and the view that, as middle class parents, it was the most important legacy

they could give their children. Mothers often discussed the importance of a mother staying at home in relation to her career choices. Several of the mothers (Anjali, Meenakshi, Chapala, Sudha, and Noor) indicated that they were choosing to stay home presently or had chosen to do so at one time, in order to contribute to their children's development. Anjali described how, with her husband's input, she had chosen a profession that allowed her to be there for her children when they came home from school. She stated:

When we got married, he [her husband] told me that he didn't want me to go out to work. He wanted me to be a homemaker and raise our children and be at home. And that was one thing that was very important, that I need to be there when my child comes back from school. At the same time, I did not want to sit at home. And you know financially also I had to contribute to the family, so I decided that I would choose a profession where once they come back from school he [her husband] would take care of them for a couple of hours and then I would be there.

Meenakshi explained how her desire to be give her children a strong foundation, particularly in education, had caused her to leave a career in the information technology field. She said:

Right now I'm not working. It's influenced my not working decision so that I can spend time with the kids and their education. Because if they don't have a strong foundation there's no point in me working now when they need me and then not working when they go off to college. I'd rather wait and then work when they get old enough to do things on their own.

Neha noted that she was looking for part-time jobs that would allow her to be at home for her children to teach them when they came from school. She said:

I'm looking for part time jobs so I can come back and teach them...and cook and do everything. In that way my husband is very supportive. So he'll help [with] all of the chores [but] I have to take care of the family and he also works most of the time. So if both of us are working I don't want the kids to suffer

Chapala noted that she did not want her children to grow up spending large amounts of time in daycare as it appeared to her that the children learned things she might find inappropriate, did not occupy their minds, and seemed stressed out. She said:

And I don't want my children growing up in these...daycares where they're learning all kinds of things and they're just sitting and doing nothing, you know not productive. And the kids are so stressed out. They're just so sad. If you go there just for an hour after school, one hour, two hours, that's fine. [But] if you have to be there before school starts and after school closes...you just come home to eat and sleep...I would never put my children in that.

Chapala also noted that she felt it was important to be at home when her children returned from school. She said:

Being there after school for the children is very important for them, because you only get to spend four hours after they get back from school. [And] you need to be sitting with them, talking to them, reading them stories, reading, working with them, giving them extra work.

Noor described her husband's view that it was more important for her to stay at home and take care of her children's education instead of working. Her response indicates that she would like to work, but that she is torn between this desire and her belief that she would not be able to balance work and adequately support her children's educational success.

She said:

My husband thought I should take care of the kids because that's more important for their education and since my husband is earning well, he thought I should stay home and take care of the kids. I want to work even now. If I get a job I may...but you know [the] kids are more important...If I go to a job it's nine to five and my kids come home at ...three o'clock so how will I do it if I go to a job? Child care and this and that? They won't go to the activities [that] I'm taking them to. If I go to a job, I'll be tired, I will be too tired to ask them the questions, "Did you do this homework, that homework?"...And the concentration of the kids will be gone.

It is important to note that, given the high household incomes for the majority of the families in the study, it was probably not a financial hardship for the mothers to make a decision to stay at home with their children.

Community Beliefs About Active Participation

Mothers' beliefs that parents should be active participants in their children's education appeared to reflect a value present in the wider Indian community. Asked about what they thought were the expectations or beliefs surrounding what role Indian parents should play in their children's education, all mothers reported that they felt there was a

strong Indian value centering on parents actively participating in their children's education. Some mothers said that this role extended to all parts of children's lives and throughout their lives while others spoke just in terms of education.

Anjali's comments appear to reflect a view that Indian parents play an active role in their children's lives until they have achieved a secure position. She articulated this by contrasting the Indian view of the role parents play in their children's lives to what she perceived as the typical American approach. She said:

Basically Asians, especially Indians, are family oriented so we support our children throughout, even after they are married, after they have children Whereas in the American society, once they are eighteen, most of the children are out of the house. I'm not generalizing, that is what I have seen so far....We feel that, whatever it takes, we first have to educate them. Once they are qualified and once they are on their own they are better able to support themselves. Whereas in the American society what happens is when there is no financial or family support children have to survive and they quit college and they go for all these short term jobs, working at McDonald's and again...[this] could be just limited to a few families.

Vidya, although she had grown up in the U.S., stated that she felt there were certain beliefs in the Indian community about the role parents should play in their children's education. She expressed it thus, "Every Indian parent puts their life for their child's education. So parents get up early to make sure that their kids study for an exam, parents follow what their kids are studying and just in general, oversee everything".

Rani shared that she believed it was a very Indian belief that parents should be very involved in their children's education and their children's lives as a whole, even when children were adults.

They're involved, they're advising, they're informing, they're pushing, they're doing everything they can to see that [the] children get a good education, are doing well in life. Nobody wants to neglect that. Whatever the circumstances, they're always involved, they don't just let go. We find it very hard to let go as a culture actually. Like, okay, at 18 you're out of the house and you're done, [it's] not like that. It's part of the culture I guess. Because right from birth through death, it's structured like that. We grew up like that with our parents. I don't think we are going to change it here because it's so much ingrained into you.

Community Beliefs About the Role of Mothers

Mothers also indicated that they believed that the larger Indian community subscribed to the belief that staying home allowed mothers to adequately contribute to their children's education and development. Asked about the thinking of women in the Indian community about the decision to stay home versus pursuing a career, Meenakshi explained that there was a strong cultural value in the Indian community that emphasized mothers spending time with their children to inculcate them with their familial values. She noted that Indian mothers were often concerned about the values that children might learn at a daycare. She said that, in India, there were mothers who worked but that they had family members they could trust to care for their children. She said:

I think for us because we have been brought up in a different way, in a different environment, we want to be around our kids as much as we can to instill our values in them. Because if we are working they'll go to child care and we don't know what values they'll pick up there. Definitely not our values, you know, because they are with other kids from other families, other homes, different cultures so you don't have control of their upbringing. [In India] I had friends with working parents and they turned out all right. But then they were in India, they had grandparents, uncles and aunts. Here we have no one. It's just us.

Radha noted that in India, traditionally women do not work and described the typical Indian view that children will stray from the correct path if mothers do not monitor them closely. Though Radha had a demanding career as a doctor, a husband who monitored her daughter's academics, and described herself as a "modern thinker", her comments reflect that, in some ways, she still shares the traditional belief about the need for mothers to be engaged in their children's education. She said:

In India, most women don't work....and most of the time most people feel that when the mother is not there to keep a personal eye on the child, the child sort of veers from the steadfast path and I think that's true....That's [the] general thinking and even though I'm more [of] a modern thinker I still believe that some of those things hold true. If I were not there to supervise personally, whatever my husband sees or not, I don't think that she would be quite in the line that we want her to be unless I put my nose in there and see what's going on.

While, she believed in the importance of mothers monitoring their children's education, Radha also noted that having a working mother could be beneficial to children. She explained that she felt her daughter took more responsibility because she had a working mother.

I think if I were at home she would be a lot more spoon-fed....Every day I wake her up but on the days she has assignments to complete I'm surprised when I come to wake her up she is already sitting here on the computer and getting it done. So she has responsibility. She knows I have to also go to work and she cannot rely completely on me. But if I were a non-working, stay at home mother then she would probably be a little slack about that because she knows that she can get help from me.

Do Mothers' Role Beliefs and Forms of Engagement Constitute Embodied Capital?

Based on Bourdieu's (1987) ideas, families possess a body of values, knowledge, and assumptions and an approach to schooling, their *habitus*. However, whether the *habitus* of a particular parent actually constitutes embodied capital is determined by the values of the institution with which he or she interacts and how useful this habitus is for negotiating the institution to obtain desired goals. Thus, parents who possess certain beliefs, values, and approaches to schooling that schools perceive as good and appropriate and that help them to navigate schools are advantaged; the school's institutional values transform parents' beliefs, values, and approach into embodied capital. An important question for the purposes of this study is, "Can it be said that the *habitus* of the mothers in the study, the values, beliefs, and approach to schooling they

reported, constituted *embodied capital* with regard to the school system?” There is a strong argument to be made that the answer to this question is yes.

Mothers’ veneration of education, their abiding belief that it would ensure a secure future for their children, which originated in their experiences in their family and was probably in turn shaped by the particular conditions that characterize Indian society (e.g., intense competition for a limited number of spaces in universities due to a large population and a history with colonialism) meant they were incredibly active participants in their children’s education, staying in close contact with teachers, constantly monitoring their children’s academic progress and behavior, and engaging in various forms of school-based involvement.

Lareau (2003) and others have pointed out that schools, to a large extent, are shaped by middle class values, that middle class forms of parent engagement such as volunteering in schools, communicating with school staff, and leveraging external resources to support children’s educational success are valued in schools. The strong value the mothers placed on education, their monitoring of their children’s academic progress, constant communication with teachers, and their school-based involvement appear to be ways of engagement consistent with what schools value.

Furthermore, mothers’ perceptions of the elementary academic curriculum in American schools as weak and their beliefs about children’s cognitive development (e.g., the importance of continual learning for children) led them to extensive academic supplementing of the regular curriculum using outside resources. For some of the mothers who were interviewed, their beliefs about the importance of a mother being at home to supervise children and teach them influenced decisions to stay at home. In some

cases a few of the women left successful careers to stay home with their children which probably gave them more time to engage in academic supplementing.

Given what research tells us about how children acquire and become fluent in academic skills (e.g., Shapiro, 2004), it can be argued that an approach that involves constantly monitoring children's progress and supplementing academics at home, both during school and in the summers, gives students more time to acquire skills and become fluent in them. This, in turn, would benefit children because it helps them achieve at a high level and reduces how much time teachers need to spend with them on acquiring academic concepts, thus leading teachers and school staff to perceive them positively, creating or reinforcing positive perceptions of a "model minority". Interestingly, the experience of one of the interviewees, Meenakshi, supports this. She described her children's teachers' positive view of her extra work with them at home:

I've been talking to all the teachers and they love the kids. They're like, "I wish all parents would do that you know, teach their kids a little bit." Because they don't have enough time in school. They appreciate it. It's not [that] I ask the teachers, "Is it okay if I teach them these things during the summer break?" They're like, "Please do it. It makes life easier for us." If there are twenty kids in the class and four or five of them already know the concepts, they can work with the kids who can't get the concept....So all of the teachers they're like can you [give] classes for parents, how to teach them? [But], "No thank you. I have enough, two kids on my hands."

Rani noted that she felt teachers and the public at large generally perceived Indian children as “brainy”. She said, “I have a feeling that they’re supposed to...academically achieve a lot.”

In sum, it can be argued that the *habitus* the mother’s brought to bear on their children’s education was shaped by particular historical and local conditions, those of colonial and contemporary India, and perhaps, to a lesser extent, ancient India. Conditions the mothers met on arrival in the U.S. (what they perceived as a weak academic curriculum), and their beliefs about the need for children to be engaged in continuous learning, also shaped their actions in some areas (e.g., academic supplementing). Fortunately for the mothers, their *habitus* functioned as embodied cultural capital in interactions with the American public school system because, in the context of modern day American public schools, it contained elements that supported their children’s academic achievement.

Question 2: What Role do Social Norms Play in Asian Indian Mothers’ Engagement in their Children’s Education?

Family Norms Regarding Education

To examine the norms present in the family concerning education and the role these norms play in mothers’ engagement in their children’s education, mothers were asked about what they told their children about education and school, and what expectations they conveyed to their children about school. Two themes emerged from the mothers’ discussion, *present effort ensures the future* and *high expectation* for academic achievement (These themes are summarized in Table 7). Analysis showed a norm about education present in the families that centered on *present effort ensures the future*, that is, that children’s current efforts in academics were laying a foundation for

the future. In addition, mothers conveyed *high expectations* for academic achievement. Mothers conveyed these norms to their children explicitly through conversations about the importance of education and their expectations and talking to them about their own struggles or those of family members, to achieve educationally.

Table 7

Themes from Family Norms

Themes	Endorsement Rate
Present effort ensures the future	83%
High expectations	100%

n = 12

Present effort ensures the future. All the mothers in the study viewed education as critical to their children’s futures. In Anumita’s words, “Without education there is no future.” Mothers reported that in communicating to their children the importance of education for their future, they often connected their children’s current effort to future career goals or a secure future. Roshni described how she explains to her son that hard work and persistence are required to achieve an education in the field (science) in which he’s interested. She said:

When I have discussions with my son, I encourage him to think about what he wants to do and just because it gets tough, don’t give up....Because at a very young age he had decided he wants to be a science student. So, to encourage that I tell him, “Just don’t give up because it’s going to be ten years of college or something like that. Don’t take the easy way out.”....I say, “Don’t give it up just because it’s hard.”

Meenakshi reported that she explains to her son that his efforts in his current studies are important to obtaining the nice things he would like in the future. She described what she tells him:

He was complaining once, “I have a lot of studies, I don’t like studying.” Sometimes he says that, at the end of school especially. I used to tell him, “It’s okay if you don’t study, its fine with me...but this is Daddy’s house what are you going to do when you grow up? Don’t you want to earn money and have a good house?”

Reshmi said that she tells her children about how she and her husband struggled in their early years in America. She noted that she explains to her children that what they currently have in life comes from her husband and her and that what they do now shapes their future. She said:

I told them how we struggled when we came to this country because we [were] not coming with any pennies. And I am...telling them what you will do now, you will get it later. Because whatever you are seeing [now] is from us; so if you want this kind of future you must study [hard] to get this kind of future.

Anumita said she explains to her son that hard work in the present is required in order for him to achieve his goal of being a surgeon who uses his surgical skills to help the poor. She said:

He wants to do free surgeries to help people....So if you want to do surgery, medic[ine], you have to do hard work now. You have to work hard now; then you’ll get there.

Anumita also said that her husband tells their son about how he struggled to get an education. She said:

He'll [her husband] tell us when he was doing engineering, he faced a lot of problems. [He had] no money so he took a loan. He used to eat only one meal a day. So in [those] conditions he finished his B.Tech, Bachelors of Engineering, and then a Master's in Engineering.

High expectations. Almost all mothers reported that they and their spouses communicated extremely high expectations for academic achievement, that they communicated to their children that they should always strive to excel, to receive the highest test scores and the highest grades. Anumita noted that while in American society it was okay to get grades of B or C she wanted her children to get A's. She said, "Here, the people say even if you get B's...that's fine. They don't mind...A, B, C's are good. I believe all the time you should be an A student...I want my kids to get all A's."

Meenakshi noted that she and her husband expect that her child get all A grades and that when he does not, she asks for an explanation. She said:

Grades, we expect all A's. If it's a B then I have to sit him down. It's not like he doesn't get any B's, he even got a C this time. But overall it's an A. As long as the overall [average] is an A, then I'm fine with it.

Noor reported that she is very clear with her children that nothing but A's is acceptable and she enforces consequences when they do not achieve A's. She said:

I always tell them even if you get even one B it won't be good. I cannot tolerate even a B. I always tell them if you don't get an A, all your things are cut, like PSP [Play Station Portable] or games...I'm going to cut your

chess club, tennis and everything. They make sure that the next test they get good scores, so they won't have that kind of punishment.

Roshni described a conversation with her son regarding his FCAT Writes scores that captures the high expectations the mothers in the study have for their children's achievement, the idea that even if you are doing well, you always strive to be better. She said:

His FCAT [Writes] scores came last week. He got a five out of six, the highest is six. Last year he got five and a half. Two people score [the essays] and then if one gives a five and one person gives a six, it's five and a half. If both give five, it's a five. I said, "_____ how come you went from five and a half to five?" He said, "Mom, I'm growing up, the prompts get tougher." I said, "Yeah, but you have three more years to prepare for those prompts." He rolled his eyes and said, "Mom, you're never happy." So, I always tell him, "There's always room to improve." You cannot just let a kid know, oh he's really doing good...you always say, "Keep working at it, keep working at it."

While most of the mothers in the study expected their children to get the best grades, a few of them (three) noted that sometimes they understood this was not always possible. Rani communicated that living in America had taught her to become more relaxed about her expectations for her children. She said:

I think I have kind of relaxed my ideas. He doesn't need to get an A all the time. It's okay if he gets a B occasionally because from what I can see, he tries his best. I know that he has a few limitations. I don't expect as much from him as I do

from my daughter, for instance, because I know she can handle it more. But in India, the pressure is unrelenting. You have to succeed in what you're going to do. Over here, the pressure that I see is not as unrelenting.

Chapala noted that she wants her children to do their best and get A grades in school, but that she understood that this is not always possible. She said:

I just want them to do their best, as long as they're making A's that's fine but you know here and there if they're making a B or C or whatever, that's fine too. I don't think that they need to be the topper and the best and get A's and nothing [other] than an A, every time. I say that's fine, if you're trying, I know you're trying that's what I'm happy about.

Community Norms Regarding Education

Mothers' responses were also analyzed for the norms present in the Asian Indian community around education. Based on the mothers' comments, four themes emerged in this area: *education is a central priority*, *competitiveness around academics*, *competitiveness motivates children*, and *competitiveness impacts children negatively* (endorsement rates for these themes are shown in Table 8). The participants in the study indicated that the strong value attached to education and academics present in their families, was also present in the Indian community as a whole. Mothers reported that children's *education is a central priority* for members of the Indian community. Mothers often discussed the best schools, and programs, and how to support their children's achievement. Furthermore, because of mothers' insistence that their children participate in various cultural activities in the Indian community, children were constantly exposed to the strong emphasis placed on education.

In addition, all the mothers interviewed indicated that in the community, there was a strong sense of *competitiveness around academics*. This competitiveness manifested itself primarily in parents constantly checking on how other children were doing and comparing those results with how their own children were doing in school. In addition, many (eight) of the mothers also expressed the belief that this *competitiveness motivates children* to achieve at a higher level. However, many of the same mothers (eight) who viewed competitiveness as motivating also reported that *competitiveness impacts children negatively*, usually by making children feel bad when they are unable to achieve what another child did or because they did not like being compared to other children. This competitiveness also appeared to negatively impact mothers when some members of the network on which they depended for information withheld valuable educational information. This is discussed in more detail in the section on the role of social networks in the mothers' engagement in education. .

Table 8

Themes from Role of Community Norms

Themes	Endorsement Rate
Education is a central priority	100%
Competitiveness around academics	100%
Competitiveness motivates children	66%
Competitiveness impacts children negatively	66%

n = 12

Education is a central priority. Mothers in the study reported that education was an overarching priority for their immediate social circles as well as for the larger Indian community. All the mothers interviewed noted that they believed that present within Indian culture was a strong emphasis on education. Meenakshi said that she was brought up with the Indian belief that education is the only option in life. She said, “Education is first and foremost. It’s a major Indian belief. We were brought up that education is the only option you have.”

Vidya, though she was raised in the U.S., noted that for Indian parents, education was more important than anything else in life. She said:

I think the average Indian parent focuses on education whereas I don’t think that’s always a necessity or a thought everywhere else. For Indian parents education is number one. There are no two ways about it. Indian parents would stop their lives to make sure that their children get an education, whether it’s an all around education or the schooling. That’s just the way that people are brought up, that education is number one and everything else falls to the side.

Noor noted that she felt that the strong value she attached to education came from India. She said, “Every other thing comes later on. I’m an Indian. I give more importance to education than anything. Academics come first for us. Other things...are after that. Asked where this belief came from, Noor said, “From India. Indian beliefs come from India so....I was born and brought up there in India so the culture is there in my blood....I cannot give that up.”

Chapala described how in India, even though certain individuals such as merchants are wealthy, they are not as respected in society and they themselves feel they are lacking because they are not well educated. She used a conversation that she had recently had with a supplier in India. She said:

Someone can be a merchant and be well-off, and people respect their wealth....Some of the business men are really not that well educated, they're...filthy rich [but] they don't speak a word of any other language....they're intelligent in a market, sales-wise. Just yesterday I was talking to one of my suppliers. [And] he was telling me, "I don't have anything in my head, I'm not educated like you Madame." So, he still has a complex about that. They know they're doing well money-wise but then they think, "Oh, I wish I had been educated and been doing my business." They want their children not to be like themselves. They want them to be successful education wise and...business wise.

Neha noted that education was a constant topic of conversation for her friends and that they constantly shared helpful information. She said:

We talk about it, [education] most of us, when we go for a walk or we meet together. We talk about education, how we have to be, how his grades are...ideas on how to improve his [her son's] studies.

Mothers noted that this view of the importance of education in the community is often related to practical concerns about their children's future. Chapala stated that most Indian parents view education as essential to a "good life". She said:

I don't think there is any Indian parent that thinks education is not important. Everybody would think it's the most important thing. Because if you don't have an education you're not going to be able to live a good life.

Anumita indicated that Indians spend a lot of time talking about their children's education, because it is so critical to their futures, given that the world is such a competitive place. She said:

Education is very important for the kids...[Indians' will send their kids to good schools only. They think the same things...education takes [a] very important part in their lives. [The] Indian community, we think like this, [the] world is a very competitive world so [in] this competitive world you have to survive.

In addition to the fact that the mothers' social circles were mostly composed of other Indian families, they reported that their children were engaged in various cultural activities in the Indian community because of their desire for them to maintain a connection to Indian culture. For instance, Chapala noted that her children participated in *Ballygokulam* (a cultural group for Hindu children that teaches them about Hinduism and Indian culture) because they would meet a lot of Indian children and learn about Indian culture, thus maintaining their connection to India. She said:

Because that's where you get to meet many other Indian families, so many other kids at the same time. It's like twenty-five, thirty kids. You can't do that every day....I think it's the only way to keep them closer to India, it's almost like being in India.

Radha noted that her daughter participated in Bharatnatyam (a 2000-year-old South Indian classical dance) and played the Indian violin and that she felt it was a good way for her to learn Indian culture. She said:

She does *Bharatnatyam*. She learns violin, the violin she's playing is a classical violin, Indian violin....I don't have the time to sit and teach her each and every nuance of the Indian culture, but this is my way of dealing with that.

As a result of contact with their parents' friends and their own participation in cultural activities, children spent large amounts of time with co-ethnic peers and were thus constantly exposed to both the emphasis on education and the competitiveness in the community. Reshmi stated that education is a constant topic of her social circle, whether in conversations between parents and children, or parents and other people's children. She said:

When we go to weekend get-togethers...I think parents do discuss more about studying also. And the kids also discuss a lot about studying. We have kids who are in public schools, private schools, everywhere. So what happens is as a parent I would ask them what activities they're doing, or what book they're using, and all that. I think it's just a discussion in general, [in the] community. Because education is important, our discussions tend towards that....everybody has [the] emphasis on education.

Asked whether she thought her children shared her beliefs about the importance of education, Sudha said that she and her family spent a lot of time around members of the

Indian community, a community which strives for high levels of education, and her children thus shared this belief. She stated:

...all the Indian group, they want to be a scientist or a doctor or they want to be big things. [It's] not like, "Okay, I'll stop in high school." They don't have that attitude because I think the Indian population...we mostly meet with Indians, all of them are very well educated, so I think they do believe.

Anjali explicitly said that she felt her children being around other children from families who shared the same emphasis on education reinforced the messages she and her husband gave her children about education. She said:

See what happens, is when the majority of their friends are Indians, everybody comes almost from the same background, the same atmosphere at home. So, when they sit and talk they say, "You know what, yesterday I got in trouble because I didn't do my homework and my mom gave me a big lecture...about how important education is." And then the other guy would say, "Same thing happened to me last week." I think it's drilled in their brain.

Competitiveness around academics. In addition to the strong emphasis on education in the Indian community, the mothers in the study reported that there was a strong sense of competition around academics in the Indian community. They noted that this competitiveness was usually in the form of parents comparing children's performance in school and their achievements. Anjali noted that she is not competitive, but that this competitiveness, usually in the form of comparing children, is present in the Indian community. She said:

I am not competitive; let me make things very clear. Academically I do want them to excel but at the same time I want to make sure that they are clear about the concepts...they're learning. I never compare my children to any other child like some parents do. That competitiveness is not there in me but generally Indians are very competitive. They want their child to be the best.

Noor said she feels the competitiveness mostly takes the form of people trying to make sure their children are doing the same thing as other children. She said:

...There is a lot of competitiveness. If the son is there in that class you have to put your son also in that class. If your son is in Kumon I should put [mine] in Kumon. I see a lot of things like that.

Competitiveness motivates children. Many of the mothers interviewed appeared to simultaneously hold both positive and negative attitudes towards the competitiveness around academics present in the Indian community. Eight mothers commented that they believed the competitiveness around academics in the Indian community served to motivate children to achieve at a higher level academically. In fact, a few of the mothers stated that they drew on the competitiveness in the community to encourage their children. For instance, Roshni said, that the competition in the community resulted in her son competing not only with himself but with others "I think that's one thing, it's not only competition with himself but competition with all the kids also; because everybody has [the] emphasis on education.

Chapala's comments reflect a struggle to use competition to motivate her children. She said that she uses comparisons to motivate her children and that she has found this to be successful with her daughter. She stated:

We constantly talk about my husband's nephews and my nieces and nephews and cousins making good grades. We compare constantly with other kids here. I don't know if that's a good thing, sometimes I do criticize. But sometimes, I try to make it a healthy competition. That has helped my daughter learn a lot of reading. It was more like a competition like, "She can read, why can't I read?" That has influenced them a lot.

Noor indicated that she believes competition helps children to achieve at a higher level and used the example of how competition within the family motivates her sons. She said:

Competitiveness is good always. It should not be between the parents; it should be between the kids. When there's a competition, the kids will shine. My sons, when the older one gets an award, the younger wants to get an award. When the older one gets 100 the younger one wants to get 100. So you need a healthy competition in all things in life.

Reshmi's comments indicate that children may sometimes settle for doing well and never strive to be the best, but that competition can give them an extra push. She said:

Competition is beneficial. [They] shouldn't be like, "Oh, I am going to school and getting an A, I don't have to do anything." Then they don't grow well. But in competition [they] are thinking, "Oh, you are getting

this, why am I not getting it?" So, they will try to do more and more because of that.

Competitiveness impacts children negatively. Although the mothers discussed how the competitiveness around academics in the community can be motivating for children, some of them (eight) also indicated that it has some negative effects. Meenakshi described how this competitiveness manifested itself negatively when her son won an elementary school speech competition. She said, "It's [the competitiveness] between the parents. We've had a few experiences, when he won the Tropicana Speech, its like people do get offended. If he wins something they get offended, in a sense, because their kids didn't make it".

Many of the mothers felt that this competitiveness sometimes impacted children negatively because some children were urged to achieve at a level they couldn't achieve or felt badly about being compared. Neha noted that she used to constantly compare her son to other children until she realized that it had a negative impact on him. She said:

That's making your kid jealous. He feels like, "Oh, see Mom doesn't like me, she likes him a lot because he's getting good grades and everything." So he used to feel like that, "Mom you don't like me? You like him a lot because he's getting good grades?" [My son] started asking those kind of questions, so that's when I realized, it's not a good thing to stress a kid like that...I saw based on my experience, I saw it in my son.

Chapala noted that her son sometimes reacted negatively to the comparisons with other children. She said:

My son will sometimes complain, “Don’t compare me with somebody else. I’m not him, I’m different.” Sometimes he feels bad... then I try not to carry it too far.

Asked about disadvantages and advantages of the competitiveness in the community, Radha noted that she felt that it was sometimes too stressful for children. She said:

The disadvantages are that sometimes it gets too much. It’s very stressful on the child, especially if I’m a parent and I take note of [another child] and say you have to be exactly like that, see how that kid is doing you have to be exactly [like that], it destroys the kid’s confidence.

Overall, analysis of the mothers’ responses showed that in the families interviewed, there exist norms that are supportive of high academic achievement including a strong focus on connecting children’s current efforts to their futures. In addition, parents also held high expectations for their children’s academic achievement, with most parents emphasizing to them that nothing less than A grades and the best academic scores were acceptable. These norms regarding the role of education in their lives and the high expectations regarding achievement were communicated to children explicitly through conversations. With regard to high expectations, children were constantly urged to strive to excel at the highest levels.

In addition to the family, another important source of norms about education to which children were exposed was the larger Indian community, other children as well as parents. The mothers interviewed reported that their families’ social circles were largely composed of other Indian families. In addition, because of a desire to maintain their

children's connections with India and Indian culture, their children engaged in a variety of cultural activities in the Indian community with their co-ethnic peers.

According to the mothers' responses, the emphasis on education and academic achievement present in the families was also present in the larger Indian community. Mothers reported that, in the Indian community, education is a central priority for children, with parents focused on accessing the best education for their children in order for them to have a secure future. It appears that children received the same messages about the importance of education that they received at home when they socialized with their co-ethnic peers and when they had contact with the parents of their co-ethnic peers.

In addition to the emphasis on education, mothers also reported that there was a large degree of competitiveness in the Indian community around academics, often apparent in how many parents constantly compared their children to other children. Mothers stated that they found this competitiveness motivating for children as it encouraged them to achieve at higher academic levels. In fact, mothers sometimes used this competitiveness to motivate their children to achieve. Finally, although the mothers described the positive advantages of the competitiveness around academics in the community, they also expressed that it sometimes impacted children negatively, particularly when children felt badly about being compared to other children or did not achieve at the high level that other children did.

Question 3: What Role do Social Networks Play in Asian Indian Mothers' Engagement in Their Children's Education?

As previously noted, mothers in the interview sample placed a high value on education and were very active participants in their children's education. However, since

most mothers were raised outside of the U.S., they did not possess a great deal of knowledge about the U.S. educational system and were often concerned that their lack of knowledge would negatively impact their children. Mother's responses regarding their use of social networks revealed that in some ways they used their social networks to compensate for their lack of knowledge of the American educational system. Analysis of the mothers' responses regarding their use of social networks to gain educational information revealed that they accessed their social networks to engage in their children's education in three major ways. First, mothers wanted to secure the best education for their children, an education that would challenge them academically. Thus, they were very concerned with accessing specialized programs in particular, Florida's AGP programs at the elementary level, school choice programs such as academically challenging magnet programs at the middle school level and the International Baccalaureate program and other academically rigorous programs at the high school level. Six themes emerged from mothers' responses to questions about the use of social networks: *formal sources of information*, *trading information*, *learning from experienced members*, *information about academic supplementing*, *limitations of the network*, and *knowledgeable outsiders*. The mothers reported utilizing *formal sources of information* such as guidance counselors and school websites to gain information about these programs. However, the mothers also reported heavy utilization of their social networks to inform themselves about these programs. They reported that with mothers who had children of the same age, they engaged in *trading information*, particularly about specialized programs that could benefit their children. Mothers also focused on *learning from experienced members* of their social networks, that is attempting to gain knowledge

from mothers who had previously gone through the process of applying to specialized programs. To a lesser extent, mothers indicated that, within their social networks, there was a mutual sharing of *information about academic supplementing*, either the need to supplement academics or how to do so. Finally, as will be discussed later, there were costs to using the network, *network limitations*, and a small group of mothers compensated for this by going to people outside of their social networks, *knowledgeable outsiders*. Table 9 shows endorsement rates for these themes.

Table 9

Themes from Social Networks

Themes	Endorsement Rate
Formal sources of information	100%
Trading information	100%
Learning from experienced members	50%
Information about academic supplementing	33%
Limitations of the network	41%
Knowledgeable outsiders	33%

n = 12

To better understand mothers' extensive use of social networks, it's helpful to understand the importance they attached to education and their position as outsiders in the American education system, that is parents who had never experienced the system themselves. As Radha reported, she tells her daughter that what has given her standing in society in America is her education as a doctor. She stated:

And the only reason...I have some respect in society...it's because I'm a [doctor] here and I have a certain standing in society and people look up to me and people ask me questions and people ask my opinion only because of my education. It's not because of anything else.

Although mothers emphasized education and believed strongly that it was critical to their children's future, they were concerned about their lack of knowledge about the American education system. Five of the 12 mothers interviewed noted that they were ignorant of important elements of the American education system and that they often feared they would miss something important which would negatively impact their children's future. Rani expressed her utter lack of knowledge about the college application process saying,

...what to do next, like college schedules for instance, I have no idea about what to do about that...now this is going to be a whole different world [and] since I don't know anything about it, I don't know what the questions are.

Anjali expressed this fear eloquently. Asked about the kinds of questions she would usually have regarding her sons' education, she said:

First I tr[y] to find out if we are doing what we are supposed to do when it comes to, let's say for [instance] high school, since it's new to us. We [her or her husband] didn't go to school here, so I constantly have this little bit of nervousness...that you know I have to find out more and see what is best for my child. If he doesn't get into the IB program then what are my other options? To try to get more AP courses? Or this dual enrollment? So

those kind of things, just mak[ing] myself aware, that my child should not be missing out on anything...through some fault of mine.

All mothers were concerned with securing the best education for their children that they could and social networks appeared to be a tool for doing so. For those who expressed anxiety about their lack of knowledge, they worked hard to secure the knowledge that would help them obtain the best educational opportunities for their children. The interviews showed that all mothers utilized social networks as a tool to assist them as they navigated the American public schooling process.

These social networks were largely composed of co-ethnic peers. Although, Coleman (1988) suggested that parents' connections with their children's classmates' parents might constitute a valuable source of educational information, all mothers in the study reported very little contact with the parents of their children's classmates. In spite of the fact that many of the mothers volunteered in their children's schools, their contact with other parents consisted of mostly greetings exchanged when children were dropped off at school. Noor described her relationship with the parents of her son's classmates, "Not very close. I have talked to them about the car pooling for the high school and stuff like that and they call me on and off for that, so that's all... not too much." Reshmi expressed a sentiment that was common to the mothers when they were asked about the parents of their children's classmates or American friends. She said that she knew the parents of her daughter's classmates well enough to trust that her daughter could go to their house and be safe, but not much beyond that. She said:

We know each other but not well, well. We meet each other sometimes....for me close means well, well. But we know them well

enough to trust [that she can] go to their house, because I have to trust them [for her] to go to their house.

Meenakshi, who had elementary aged children, knew some of the parents who were homeroom parents, but noted that her interactions with her children's classmates parents consisted mostly of conversation exchanged when children were picked up from school. She said, "I know a few because the homeroom parents I know and the rest I sometimes meet in the school....Whenever we drop off the kids and pick-up, we talk."

All of the mothers reported that their social networks were composed mostly of co-ethnic peers, that is, other mothers from the Indian community. As Anjali noted when asked about the composition of her friendship network, "Yes, they're all from the Indian community...I don't know intentional, unintentional." Vidya who was born and raised in the U.S., was asked from where she drew most of her friends. She said, "I guess cultural associations". Rani was from a state in northeastern India which has a different language and distinct cultural traditions when compared to the North and South Indian mothers that composed the rest of the interview sample. She stated that, although she did not always share the culture of her friends, she chose friends who shared the same mindset and values; and these friends were mostly Indian. She said:

When I came here I didn't know anybody. But as soon as my daughter went to school, I knew a whole lot of people, who I'd never met but these are all Indian parents. See all of them are different cultures and different languages. But for the ones who are kind of like me, my mindset and my values, they are my very close friends....And they don't speak the same

language and they don't have the same culture also, except that we are all from India.

Thus, mothers in the sample's social networks were composed mostly of other mothers from the city's Indian community. When mothers desired information about education from other parents, they turned to these social networks, composed largely of co-ethnic peers.

Formal sources of information. All the mothers interviewed indicated that they relied on formal sources of information to access information about the American schooling process in general, particularly about the rigorous magnet programs at the high school level in the district and the college application process. Mothers most often reported relying on guidance counselors and the Internet for information. As Meenakshi expressed, she relied heavily on the Internet, she said, "I go Google, that's my first place. I always Google everything. I find most of my answers there." Noor indicated that she had a good relationship with the guidance counselor at her son's school and that she learned a lot from this woman. Asked what her first stop was for questions she had about her son's schooling experience she said, "Guidance counselor, first to her" and went on to note that "The student counselor tells us what to do and what not to do."

Despite their use of guidance counselors and the Internet for information, the mothers were not satisfied with this source of information and turned to their social networks. All of the mothers interviewed indicated that they relied on a network of Indian friends to trade a variety of education information including the best SAT prep classes and special educational programs like summer science camps, and most often, information about magnet programs at the high school level. In making educational

decisions for their children, the mothers appeared to attach special weight to the information obtained from this network in comparison to formal knowledge, information they found on the Internet or that they obtained through guidance counselors. Neha commented on this, saying that while the Internet was valuable, she felt she learned more from conversations with others. She said, “Because I don’t know anything, I try to do the online search...but if you talk about it you [learn] more things.” Asked about the value of information gained from her friendship network in making educational decisions for her child, Chapala noted that she valued this information more than information gained from formal sources, because it came from people who thought similarly to her. She said:

It’s very helpful, I mean I go to the Internet and check it out but this [information from friends] is more important because it’s first-hand information and they’ll be frank with you. If they don’t like it, they’ll tell you it’s not good. And then you will only be talking to somebody that you really get along with, so you know that they think like you. So you feel confident in their decision, so you go ahead.

It is possible that extensive use of the social network, besides offering the mothers knowledge from a perspective similar to their own, is also in some respects a cultural norm for the mothers. Three of the mothers interviewed explicitly expressed the belief that using people as information sources was an Indian cultural norm. Rani expressed this most clearly, saying that social networks were important and one thing that was missing from Indian social networks in the U.S. was the presence of people of varying ages.

The problem with immigrant parents over here is that they are all the same age. In India you have the old, the young and all the in-betweens. So, if you're lost there's always somebody to tell you that maybe you should do it this way, you know social networking....And we're very vocal people, actually you know, we love to talk.

Roshni noted that she did not usually ask her co-workers any questions because she perceived that Americans do not talk about those things and that she usually confined her questions to her Indian friends. She said, "...at work I talk but I don't get much because like I said they're all [Americans]. So they...just take care of it...so mostly it's my friends[hip] group, Indian friends."

Trading information. All interviewees reported that they utilized social networks to aid them in their attempts to locate and secure entrance into the best magnet programs in the district for their children, whether they are at the middle school level or at the high school level. As in most districts, these programs constitute a form of school choice and entrance is not guaranteed. Thus all parents in the district, including the ones who participated in this study, must familiarize themselves with what offerings are available, the entrance requirements for each program, find the best match for their children, and secure entrance for them. It is arguable, and certainly their comments supported this, that the mothers in this study brought less knowledge to the table about American public schooling than other American middle class parents in the district. Most of the mothers' anxiety appeared to center on navigating the transition from middle school to high school and thus laying the proper foundation for their children's college careers. Reshmi

captures this underlying anxiety that most of the mothers in the study demonstrated. She said:

Right now I am worried about this common question, did they take the right subject? Did I miss something? Because I don't know if they took the right subjects. So, all of the choices kind of confuse you because there is room for worry and mistakes.

Mothers constantly traded what they learned back and forth. Anjali described how information is shared in her social circle about educational programs. She said:

If I know about a particular program that is good, it could be good for my child, it could be good for another child...we share it when we meet at parties or gatherings; we sit and talk about it. You know this so and so program offered at USF or...at the Temple...academic classes for SATs and stuff like that.

Rani described how her friends shared information about their choice of high school programs for their children. She said:

We all sat down and we kind of discussed all the options that we had, okay, it's a good school, it's a bad school, don't go here, don't go there. And after that you kind of made up your mind.

Roshni described the process of trading information in her social circle as "comparing notes". She said:

When I talk to friends in the Indian community, same age group it's more like comparing notes. "I heard this, is that right?"...She talks to her counselor, I talk to my counselor then if I learn something I say, "Hey, this

program is there, do you want it?" If she sees something about a college fair somewhere, she'll call me up.

Learning from experienced members. Another way the mothers (six) in the study appeared to access their social networks to engage in their children's education was in learning from experienced members, mothers who had dealt with the topic about which they were seeking information. A number of the mothers in the study stated that they especially valued the perspectives of mothers with older children who had faced the same decisions so they could benefit from their knowledge. Sudha described this saying, "It's very good information that we'll get from the other parents because they already went through everything so they know good and bad...it's very helpful."

In describing her decision to put her son in an Advanced Gifted Program (AGP) at the elementary level, Chapala described how she tried to get a sense of the programs from parents who had children in it. She said:

...and I was talking to her about that and I spoke to a couple of other people also, asked them if it was really good for the children. So... I found out what it was before I even put him in there.

Noor stated that she gives a lot of weight to what older children and their parents in her social circle have communicated to her because they have gone through high school and that this information has prepared her for the steps she needs to take during her children's secondary schooling. She said:

Friends ask me because I get the information... from the older kids. I keep in touch with them and I get all the information...[They've] already finished high school and they have more experience about it. [Parents of

the older kids] also tell us what to do and what not to do... We just listen to what they say. Their kids are successful so when we ask them to help...we follow [what they say], it's very useful. And we know now, before we go to high school, we know all the procedures to go to college and stuff like that.

Information about academic supplementing. All the mothers interviewed, with the exception of one, indicated that they supplemented their children's school work in elementary school with extra academic work. They usually did this because of their view that the American curriculum in elementary school was too slow or beliefs that even during breaks, children needed to be academically challenged, to build the habit of studying and to keep their brains active. This is described in more detail in the section on embodied cultural capital.

A small number of the mothers interviewed (four), indicated that they learned of the need for academic supplementing or received information about resources that could be used to supplement their children's education from members of their social networks. Neha noted that a friend advised her to supplement her children's work with extra academic work at home. She said, "Actually one of my friends suggested this...because compared with the American syllabus...the...times table they teach in second grade or third grade but in India we learn [that] from kindergarten." Meenakshi described this reciprocal sharing about academic supplementing, saying, "I let everybody know; whenever I find a website that is good, I let everybody know... or [if] they find a good website they let me know." Anjali noted that she had learned from observing her child

that she needed to do something extra at home but that also, “Through friends when you talk to people. “

Limitations of using the network. While mothers in the study valued their social networks and relied heavily on these networks for information to support their children’s educational success, analysis of the interviews showed that a number (five) of the mothers believed that these networks had limitations. One issue was the limited knowledge contained within the networks if your network didn’t contain members with older children. Neha explained this, noting that she had found that talking to Indian parents was not very helpful because, as immigrants, they knew little and had children the same age as her children. She said, “Sometimes we had to keep talking with the American parents....I wouldn’t get that much information if I talked to the Indian....They’re just learning about it [and] my friend circle [has kids] my kids’ ages.”

Rani noted that she felt it was helpful to compare notes with her friends, but that because Indian parents were immigrants, they knew little. She said,

My Indian friends are not a very good source of information. Because they are also in the same boat, they also are looking for information. In the sense that if they are discussing things then we all sit down and we discuss it, that’s okay. But how much do they know about it? Unless they went to school over here, no. So, we are all in the same boat.

All mothers in the study discussed the high level of competition around academics in the Indian community. Almost all the mothers interviewed felt that this competitiveness had negative aspects. Competitiveness appeared to limit the usefulness of social networks by parents either withholding valuable information from the network or, in the case of

college preparation, duplicating what another child was doing. Although only three mothers, Chapala, Vidya, and Meenakshi had experienced this personally, all the mothers interviewed reported that they knew of situations in the Indian community in which parents had withheld information. Chapala described how mothers withheld information. She said:

I've seen a lot of moms being so...protective about the information about what the child is doing. They don't want to share; it's like only my child needs to excel, nobody should be above them, it's that kind of thing....Yes, there are many moms who come and find out from you [what you are doing]. And when you ask them, "What are you doing?" [They say], "Oh, my daughter's not doing anything...I don't push her or anything." And the next minute that girl comes and tells you, "Oh, my mom bought me this thing, my mom has put me in an AGP class and she got me tested."

Vidya described her experience with both parents withholding information and duplicating her daughter's activities. With regard to parents duplicating activities she said:

You know I've found that a lot of Indian parents will ask you, "What are you doing?" "What are you doing?" "What are you doing?" And then they go and do everything that you were planning to do for your kid but they do it better and there's no room for your child in that project anymore.

She noted that, as a result of these experiences, she had stopped sharing information with friends and only shared information with one other friend who she believed shared her non-competitive orientation. She said:

I don't talk to people...I can't say never. I have one friend that I do talk to. We both have kids in the same grade and neither of us is competitive. The parents get extremely competitive to the point that it feels like they're nasty. I've found out over the last three or four years that my giving out information to everybody backfires for my daughter. I've seen too many parents worry about, "What's my daughter's SAT scores?" "What's everybody else's child's SAT scores?" "Where did so and so go to take their SAT prep classes?" Well, let's put them there and one other place but they won't tell you where they put their kid.

Knowledgeable outsiders. Perhaps to compensate for the limitations of the network on which they relied so heavily, a few of the mothers (four) turned to parents outside of their mostly Indian social networks for guidance about educational decisions for their children. Vidya reported that she only shared information with one friend because she distrusted the social network due to her experiences. Vidya was also able to access information from outside her friendship network because she possessed an advantage in comparison to other mothers interviewed. Unlike them, she was born in the U.S., was educated here, and also had a number of highly educated family members who received their education in the U.S. She was thus able to turn to these family members when she needed guidance. This is illustrated by her experience with the college

admissions process for her daughter. Asked about how much help she needed during this process, she explained:

I have a large family in the country and everybody grew up here. I have a cousin who graduated from Princeton two years ago, a Rhodes Scholar and another cousin who works [at Princeton]. We did talk to my dad several times. My father is a professor.

Others in the study did not have this luxury. Though some of them had family members who were highly educated, they were all educated in India. Thus, these mothers appeared to turn to people they perceived as knowledgeable about the school system or had children who were very successful in school. Chapala noted that she talked to mostly Indians with the exception of a couple of women from whom she learned a lot. Asked who she turned to for information about education, she said,

Mostly Indians but...I told you about these friends here, one White and [one] Black who is a teacher herself. So I would go and speak to [her] and ask her too what she thinks because I know her children are doing extremely well and they're going to middle school. And there's another White American, _____ who lives on the other side on _____ Drive and she has twins and she's almost like an Indian mom, she's on top of all the educational activities and she takes them to every other class that I know exists in the world...and her children are brilliant. So I ask her sometimes what she thinks and what school is good and what is not good.

Asked if she spoke to just Indian parents, Radha noted that she speaks to co-workers whose children she perceives are very successful in school. She said:

I talk to my colleagues at work....Right now there's a [woman] whose son is very, very smart. He was in the Duke University summer program as a seventh grader. He had made very high scores in the SATs, almost matching those of a high schooler....So I rely also a lot on what she tells me. I talk to her very frequently.

It is clear for the mothers who were interviewed that social networks played a large role in their engagement in their children's education. These mothers believed strongly in the importance of education for their children's future. Their children attended public schools in a large urban district in an era in which school choice increasingly plays a role. This means that parents who want an academically rigorous education cannot simply send their children to school but must navigate the district's choice process in order to secure entrance for their children to gifted programs at the elementary level and academically rigorous magnet programs at the middle and high school levels. In this context, the mothers in the study were to some extent constrained by their limited knowledge of the American schooling process. To secure the best education for their children, they accessed formal sources of information. However, their social networks, made up for the most part of other Indian mothers in the city, played a large role in the decisions they made. Mothers traded information about the educational process, particularly about securing entrance into the district's high school magnet programs. Mothers particularly valued and sought out network members who had older children because they were experienced, and could share an insider perspective with them. Finally, mothers were able to gain information from these networks about academic supplementing.

However, using the network was not without its drawbacks. If one's network did not contain experienced members, then the knowledge gained was limited because members were not educated in the U.S. *and* had no experiences to share. In addition, competitiveness meant that some members of the network withheld information or duplicated a child's activities, thereby causing that child to lose his or her edge in the college admissions process. A few mothers addressed this by seeking information from people outside the network, knowledgeable outsiders.

Receiving Context

Portes (2000) notes that in order to avoid reifying theories about the cultural superiority and inferiority of particular immigrant groups during discussions of cultural and social capital, it is important to pay attention to broad structural forces in society, particularly the receiving context for different immigrant groups. For instance, for Mexican Americans, one of the largest immigrant groups in the U.S., it can be argued that a very different receiving context exists than that for Asian families. Portes (2000) describes this difference saying:

Immigrants from Asia are beneficiaries of a relatively benign reception in the United States, marked by the absence of persecution by government authorities, declining discrimination by natives, and the halo effect of successful settlement and adaptation by prior Asian cohorts. Mexicans, on the other hand, are regularly persecuted as potentially illegal aliens and are subject to much external discrimination as "takers" of American jobs and bearers of an inferior culture (p. 10)

Indeed, a few of the mothers in this study indicated that they believed there were by and

large positive perceptions of Indian's academic achievement in the larger American society. For instance, asked what she thought the perceptions of Indians were, Anjali said, "Most of the kids are very high achievers and very academically smart....overall you know, our community has been doing quite well."

In addition, when one examines broad structural forces like socioeconomic status and what it means for access to good public schools, Asian Indians, including this interview sample, also come to America with high levels of education and earn higher incomes because they often come to America by obtaining HI-B visas, which are given to high demand specialty professions (e.g., engineers, doctors). This means most Asian Indian families in the U.S. live in middle to high socioeconomic status (SES) neighborhoods and have access to better schools, in contrast to other immigrant groups that may be stuck in segregated neighborhoods and the poor schools usually present in these neighborhoods (e.g., Waters, 1999).

However, although Portes discusses a "relatively benign reception context" for Asians, the comments by mothers in the sample do not support this. Some mothers, particularly those who worked outside the home, discussed racism as an issue in American society. Chapala, though noting that perceptions of Indians had improved in recent years, said there were still issues, particularly in the workplace. She stated:

Nowadays I think it's changing quite a bit. They know that Indians that we're really very smart and bright and a lot of them know that most of the ...top notch physicians and internists are Indians. Indians are kind of dominating the market in the IT field...every other IT job is taken by an Indian. But at the same time my husband does have issues and it's

sometimes people coming in yelling, “What are you doing? Do you know what you’re doing?” Things like that. And his colleagues get yelled at sometimes, the Americans they come and complain, “Oh, that fellow he doesn’t know anything.” Or, “Go back to your country.” and things like that. There is a lot of that.

Radha says she talks about her experiences with discrimination with her daughter and that she thinks many Indian parents feel there is no discrimination but they are mistaken in this view. She said:

You know the thing I tell [my daughter] is...you were born and raised in this country but you’re always going to be a foreigner in this country, period. Don’t be fooled by anything you see, there is prejudice. That’s the bottom line and you have to learn to live with it. People are going to say things about you and they’re going to discriminate you from color or nationality or race standpoint even though it says equal opportunity, that’s not true....There are many Indian parents who think there is no more discrimination and that we can fight it and all that...[But] I know. I went to ____ [and it] is an elite white school. I am I think the only non-white female foreign medical graduate who went through a residency program at _____. Surgical residency is a very coveted thing in the U.S., even today. To go through a top residency program...there was discrimination, that’s for sure.

Those who stayed home appeared to have less knowledge of racism. Anjali is an example of this. Asked if she ever discussed racism as an issue in the world, Anjali said,

“No, I don’t share anything [about that] and I haven’t had any experience as such and neither have they had so far.”

Most of the mothers did not discuss racism with their children mostly because they felt that it would place a negative idea and an excuse for failure in their heads. Vidya is an example of this. Though she described the U.S. as a society in which, “...everything is equal but still you need to prove yourself one step more.” she indicated that she does not discuss this with her daughter because, as she explained, “I want her to be herself. I don’t want her to work because she feels inferior to anybody.”

Mothers articulated that regardless of any discrimination, their children would be able to achieve at a high level as long as they possessed high levels of academic qualifications. Anumita said, “If you’re good, if you’re in the top of your class, if you’re intelligent, wherever you go, you’ll be fine.” Noor noted that regardless of discrimination, you could succeed and used the current president, President Obama, as an example of this. She said:

I know a lot of Muslim Americans who are shining very well in their studies....they are doctors and engineers and lawyers. I don’t think that [discrimination] plays a role here. In America...no matter who you are you can shine if you are good. Obama, our President, is one of the examples so I don’t think that matters here.

It is also possible, as some have argued (Ogbu, 2003), that the mothers in the study compared their experiences with discrimination in America with the obstacles to educational and professional success in Indian society and found that American society is

easier to navigate because high levels of education are more easily obtained and lead to professional success. Noor expressed this belief. She stated:

In India it's totally different. If you are a politician's son, or if you're rich, or if you're [from a] special caste....[you] can shine easily. Not the poor people. There's a lot of difference between India and here. You have to pay a lot of money and stuff. When you compare, here if you have a scholarship you can shine. Even though people are rich back home because of the caste [system], there is a lot of discrimination. And to shine from a poor family you have to be extraordinarily good in studies, and you have to have contacts in the college or friends to help. Here, it's not like that. If you're really good in studies, if you're able to get past the SAT exams and medical exams and [get] good scores, you can go easily into medical school.

Portes (2000) notes that the negative reception that some immigrant groups encounter "...inevitably affects the outlook of immigrants, reducing their expectations of what is possible to achieve in their new country, and consequently, their aspirations for the children" (p. 10). However, context of receptions are not fixed and unchanging.

Furthermore, immigrant parents bring a habitus with them, a habitus shaped by their experiences in their country of origin and this habitus doubtless shapes how they perceive and experience their context of reception. In the case of this study, the mothers possessed a strong belief about the power of education to ensure future security. These beliefs were likely shaped by the particular historical and local conditions of India, and their experience with immigration, that those who were educated were able to immigrate here

and make a better life for themselves. They also perceived discrimination in American society as something that could be overcome by attaining high levels of education. This habitus, along with their access to stable neighborhoods and good schools, likely helped them to cope with negative aspects of the reception context. Moreover, this habitus shaped the way they approached their children's schooling: the active roles they played in their children's education, including academic supplementing, the family and community norms to which their children were exposed that embraced education as the most important thing in life and critical to the future, and the mothers' use of social networks to navigate the American educational system. In interaction with the American educational system this habitus likely functioned as embodied cultural capital that in turn positively impacted their children's academic achievement.

Chapter Five

Discussion

This chapter reviews the purpose of this study and the research questions addressed. Next, findings are summarized for each of the research questions and discussed within the context of the salient literature. Then design and methodological limitations are discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion about the implications of the findings for researchers and suggestions for future research.

This study brought together three often disparate strands of thinking: theories about social capital, theories about cultural capital, and the education of immigrant students. The increasingly diverse U.S. population and data showing that different subgroups of immigrant students have very different educational experiences have prompted scholars to use a variety of theoretical lenses to try and understand this phenomenon. The idea that capital, something of value, can exist within the relations between people was first advanced by the economist Glen Loury (1977). In the U.S., James Coleman (1988) advanced the idea that forms of social capital, in particular social networks and social norms, can facilitate or constrain action, that in the arena of education, it can play an influential role in parents' participation in their children's education. Pierre Bourdieu (1987), the French sociologist, also noted that parents' social networks influence the role they play in their children's education. Moreover, Bourdieu argued that parents bring to bear forms of capital of great value through their engagement in their children's education. The present study focused on Bourdieu's theoretical

constructs of embodied cultural capital and social networks. Bourdieu argued that a person's habitus, that is, their beliefs, values, and ways of interacting, would become valuable embodied cultural capital through interactions with an institution that valued those ways of thinking and interacting. A particular habitus becomes embodied cultural capital largely because it meshes with institutional values and thus allows those who possess it to successfully navigate an institution to obtain desired goals. Bourdieu focused most closely on class in the production of embodied cultural capital, arguing that class background shapes a person's habitus. More recent scholarship (e.g., McNamara Horvath, 2003) has focused on other kinds of distinctions (e.g., race) that also play an important role in shaping embodied cultural capital.

A review of the literature on social and cultural capital revealed that there was very little research addressing these concepts, particularly with regard to immigrant families. Research using Coleman's ideas about social norms and social networks has often involved large scale quantitative studies (e. g., using National Educational Longitudinal Study data sets) that do not allow for an in depth understanding of his ideas. Similarly, very little research has examined Bourdieu's ideas. The few qualitative studies (Horvath & Lareau, 2003) that have examined cultural capital and schooling have not addressed the experiences of immigrant groups in the U.S.

The immigrant group selected for this study was the Asian Indian group. Among immigrant groups to the U.S., the educational experiences of Asian Indian students and their families remain largely unexplored (Prashad, 2000). India, located in southern Asia is a vast country containing an array of religious and cultural traditions. The Indian population is religiously diverse, majority Hindu, but with a large Muslim population and

sizeable numbers of Sikhs, Buddhists and Christians. Linguistic diversity is extensive; Hindi, Urdu, English as well as languages native to local areas and states are spoken widely (Isaksen Leonard, 1997). Caste, class, and religion are all important organizing features of Indian society.

Indian immigration to the U.S. increased dramatically post-1965 due to changes in U.S. immigration laws and the desire of educated Indians to pursue financial opportunities in the U.S. Indian immigration to the U.S. continues to grow at a rapid pace. Currently, there are approximately 1.7 million Asian Indians in the U.S. (U.S. Census, 2000). Furthermore, Census data show that the majority of Asian Indians who immigrate to the U.S. have attained a Bachelors degree or higher (U.S. Census, 2000).

The present study examined how Asian Indian mothers engage in their children's education and to what extent they draw on various forms of social and cultural capital to do so. Forms of capital examined in this study were based on the theoretical concepts discussed by both James Coleman (1988) and Pierre Bourdieu (1987). These forms are social norms, social networks, and embodied cultural capital. The study used a qualitative methodological approach in order to provide an in-depth examination of the *nature* of the forms of capital that the participants, 12 Asian Indian mothers, used to participate in their children's education.

The central research question examined in this study was: To what extent do Asian Indian mothers access different forms of social and cultural capital to engage in their children's education? To answer this question the following areas were examined.

- a. What role does embodied cultural capital play in Asian Indian mothers' engagement in their children's education?

- b. What role do social norms play in Asian Indian mothers' engagement in their children's education?
- c. What role do social networks play in Asian Indian mothers' engagement in their children's education?

Embodied Cultural Capital

In discussing how the findings of the present study relate to prior literature in this area, it must be noted that there is very little research that uses the concept of embodied cultural capital to examine the experiences of families with schooling, in particular immigrant families. Bourdieu explicated the concept of embodied cultural capital using the mechanism of *habitus*. He described habitus as the dispositions, attitudes, values, and behaviors that parents possess and argued that when aligned with what is valued by the dominant culture and the education system, a parent's habitus can become embodied capital (Horvath, 2003). The participating mothers were asked about their beliefs about the importance of education. Analysis of interviewee responses in this area reveals that the mothers in the study had a deep respect for education. They prioritized education above all else in their children's lives, including extracurricular activities. In part, due to their backgrounds both in India and the U.S. as middle class families, the mothers in the study believed that *education ensures security* and to a lesser extent that *education makes you a better person*. Asked from where they derived their beliefs about education, the mothers said that it was due to the *parental encouragement and support* they had received for the pursuit of education, it was an *Indian cultural value*, was influenced by aspects of contemporary *Indian society*, and the *struggle against colonialism*. A minority

of participants said that the strong emphasis on education in Indian society was due to *indigenous educational traditions* of India.

These findings show that the mothers' habitus, in particular their beliefs about education, was shaped by their position as middle class families in India and the U.S., as Bourdieu's ideas would lead us to expect, but also by a history of colonialism in India, specific characteristics of Indian society (overpopulation and an extremely competitive school system) and by local conditions in the destination country (an elementary curriculum that in the mothers' view lacked academic rigor). These findings align with Bhattacharya & Schopeley's (2004) earlier findings that Indian parents, prior to their emigration from India, placed a high value on education and that this stemmed partly from the Indian experience with colonialism. However, unlike the families in Bhattacharya & Schopeley's study, the families in this study had been rewarded for their educational attainment; in fact, it was what enabled them to immigrate to the U.S., thereby strengthening their commitment to education

Mothers were also asked about their beliefs about their role in their children's education, as well as beliefs in the larger Indian community about the role of parents in their children's education. They reported that it was important to be *active participants* in children's education. Careful examination of their responses about what being an active participant meant showed that *academic supplementing, school-based involvement, and frequent communication with teachers* were important.

With the exception of one mother, the participants reported devoting large amounts of time to supplementing their children's elementary school curriculum. They also reported that this stemmed from dissatisfaction with an American curriculum that

they perceived as wasting a lot of time during the elementary years. In addition, mothers believed that it was important for children's minds to engage in small amounts of extra academic work on a daily basis and during the summers.

The finding that mothers played very active roles in their children's education aligns with findings by Abbas (2002) in England. Abbas found that Indian students reported that their parents had played very active roles in their education, particularly in helping them to gain admission to selective secondary schools. However, these mothers' habitus differs from what other work (Lareau, 2003) has found when examining the approach of middle class American mothers. The mothers in this study played very active roles in their children's education, as did the middle class American mothers in Lareau's research. Lareau found that middle-class parents engaged in a cultural logic of child rearing that included concerted cultivation, that middle class parents "enroll[ed] their children in numerous age-specific organized activities" and "view[ed] these activities as transmitting important life skills to children" (p. 748). The mothers in the present study often enrolled their children in extracurricular activities for leisure, but more often to retain their connection to Indian culture.

In addition, Lareau (2003) found that middle class American parents viewed schools as places that could be negotiated to alter their children's experience in ways that fit their children's particular needs. However, Lareau's poor and working class families deferred to the expertise and judgment of school staff and often did not question their judgment. The working and poor parents viewed educating their children as the school's job and relied on the school to contact them if there were any issues.

The mothers in the present study appeared to have an approach to schooling that does not completely fit with either the poor and working class American parents or the middle class parents in Lareau's (2003) study. The mothers interviewed took a much more active role than the poor and working class mothers in Lareau's research, staying in frequent contact with teachers in order to check on their children's progress. Like the middle class mothers in Lareau's research, mothers participating in the present study sometimes asked for adjustments to be made for their children; for instance, in a couple of cases when children were acting out because they finished the work too quickly and were bored, the mothers asked the teacher to give the children extra work sheets. However, these mothers more often seemed to focus on what they could do to support their children rather than asking the school to provide accommodations. The issue of academic supplementing is an example of this. When mothers realized, whether through their own observation or through conversation with other Indian mothers, that the elementary curriculum in America lacked academic rigor, most of them did not approach the school about this issue, instead they engaged in academic supplementing at home, both during the school year and during the summers. This issue was also addressed on a community level by the provision of extra academic resources such as weekend academic classes at the local Hindu temple. This also contradicts Horvath, Weininger & Lareau's (2003) finding with a sample of U.S. middle class parents that the parents tended to address issues with the school as a group.

The findings that mothers were active participants in their children's education also contradicted Crozier and Davis's (2008) findings with South Asian (Pakistani & Bangladeshi) parents in England. Crozier and Davis found that these parents were

“nonparticipants” in their children’s education and left most left most major decisions in the hands of the school. They also found that parents lacked an understanding of what the schools perceived to be appropriate parent involvement. In contrast, mothers in the present study often volunteered at schools and worked very hard to ensure their children’s educational success by trying to secure entrance for them to the district’s array of academically rigorous magnet and gifted and talented programs.

A number of mothers also expressed the belief that *staying home is important* in order to best support children’s education and development. Mothers noted that by staying home they could work with their children on academic skills and support their development. Mothers discussed this as a value they held, as well as a value widely endorsed in the Indian community.

This finding aligns with the results of Reay’s (1998) research with middle class mothers in England, which found that middle class mothers provided extra academic assistance at home to their children. However, unlike the mothers in Reay’s study who had experienced the provision of extra academic assistance in their families of origin, the mothers in this study had not. However, they had experienced their parents going above and beyond what was provided in school, that is providing them with extra lessons to help them attain high scores on the competitive college entrance examinations in India. Thus it can be argued that like the mothers in Reay’s study, the mothers in this study possessed a habitus for education that included the belief that it was normal to provide assistance and resources *in addition* to what the school provided.

Bourdieu argued that parents’ habitus is transformed into embodied cultural capital depending on what is valued by the institution with which they interact (Grenfell

& James, 1998). Thus schools, based on what they value, transform the beliefs, values, and approaches to schooling of some parents into embodied capital. It can be argued that the habitus of the mothers in the present study constituted embodied cultural capital. These mothers' strong belief in the value of education, that it was the only path to a secure future for their children, appear to have originated in their experiences in their families when they were children, particular features of Indian society such as intense competition for a small number of spots in universities in an overpopulated society, and a history with colonialism. As a result, mothers were extremely active in their children's schooling experiences, staying in close contact with teachers, monitoring their children's academic progress and behavior, and often volunteering in schools.

Schools, many researchers (e.g., Lareau, 2003; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001) have pointed out, value certain forms of engagement like volunteering, communicating with school staff in a supportive fashion and leveraging external resources to support children's educational success. Lopez, Scribner, and Mahitivanichcha (2001) argue that schools privilege certain forms of involvement over others. They say, "...the implicit assumption is that parents who are not involved in [specific] ways lack the ability to provide adequate home learning environments for their children." (p. 256). Thus, the mothers in the study were fortunate in that their common forms of engagement probably meshed well with what schools value. This is supported by the mothers' reports of largely positive relationships with schools.

Furthermore, mothers' perceptions of a weak curriculum, the importance of continual learning, and their beliefs about staying home meant that they engaged in a large amount of academic supplementing of the regular curriculum. Since a large body

of research (e.g., Shapiro, 2004) indicates that extensive time engaged in practicing academic skills increases academic achievement, the efforts of the participating mothers likely helped their children achieve at a high level and reduced the time teachers needed to spend with these children learning academic concepts. This no doubt contributed to the largely positive perceptions that teachers and school staff had of the mothers' children.

Thus, the mothers in the study possessed a habitus shaped by experiences in their families of origin, particular historical events in India, and features of Indian and U.S. society. These factors combined to shape their habitus for schooling. This habitus appeared to contain elements supportive of academic achievement and thus functioned as embodied cultural capital in interactions with the public school system.

Social Norms

Coleman (1988) argued that social relationships can yield benefits that can be translated into something of value, academic outcomes for instance. With regard to *social norms* he argued that they are a form of social capital which sanction and reward behaviors like studying or earning high grades. He argued that social norms are more effectively maintained in social networks in which there is a high degree of closure, where everyone knows everyone. According to Coleman, social networks characterized by intergenerational closure, where parents' friends are the parents of their children's friends would also serve to more effectively reinforce social norms

Participating mothers were asked about family norms regarding education. Their responses indicated that they conveyed to their children that *present effort ensures the future*, that their current efforts in school were important for their future success in life.

In addition, mothers reported that they and their spouses conveyed high expectations for achievement to their children, that they should always strive to achieve at the highest levels possible. Mothers conveyed these norms through conversations with their children about how critical education was to their lives and telling them about struggles they or family members had faced in attempting to secure educational credentials.

The finding that parents explicitly communicated to their children on a regular basis their expectations for high achievement fits with Bhattacharya & Schopely's (2004) comments that, in Asian Indian families, expectations for academic achievement are explicitly conveyed to children and complying with these and other parental expectations are seen as part of the duty of children

Prior research on social capital has indicated that parent-child discussion about educational issues impacts positive outcomes like college enrollment (Meier, Sandefur, & Campbell, 2006; Perna & Titus, 2005). However, these studies used large scale data sets like NELS so social norms were operationalized by asking parents how much time they spent talking to their children about school-related topics. In addition, these studies provided no information about the content of these discussions. Thus, this study's findings about the *content* of these discussions sheds new light on this area.

Findings also indicate that the mothers' strong emphasis on achievement was mirrored by an emphasis on academic achievement in the wider Asian Indian community. Mothers reported that children's *education is a central priority* as a norm, noting that the best schools and programs and how to support children's academic success were common topics of conversation in the community. Due to their participation in various cultural

activities in the Indian community, children were constantly exposed to these conversations and, therefore, to the strong emphasis placed on education.

Mothers also reported there was a strong sense of *competitiveness around academics* in the Asian Indian community, that parents constantly compared how their children were doing to other children. Simultaneously, mothers reported that there was a belief that this *competitiveness motivates children*, but that this *competitiveness impacts children negatively*, as well.

Previous research (e.g., Kao & Taggart Rutherford, 2007) has pointed out the need to better understand the *quality* of social capital possessed by students. For instance, using NELS data, Kao & Taggart Rutherford (2007) found that intergenerational closure benefitted the achievement of Asian students more than African American and White students, but could not explain the finding. The finding in the present study that students were constantly exposed to both family and community norms that emphasized academic achievement may help to explain Kao & Taggart Rutherford's (2007) finding. It is possible that certain immigrant communities are more tightly knit, functioning as what Coleman termed closed networks and thus giving children more exposure to community norms about achievement.

The finding that there existed social norms that emphasized academic achievement and children were exposed to these norms through their participation in cultural activities as well as through their parents' friendship groups aligns with Zhou and Bankston's (1998) ethnographic study of a Vietnamese immigrant community in New Orleans. In Zhou and Bankston's study, norms conducive to academic achievement were maintained and reinforced by social networks of co-ethnic peers whose parents shared

similar values about the importance of academic achievement. In the case of this study, although the parents were not concentrated in a geographical location, they came into contact with each other through regular cultural activities and gatherings of friendship groups. This appears to have been enough for norms that encouraged academic achievement to be conveyed to children.

This finding is also similar to Lew's (2007) study comparing high achieving Korean American students to dropouts. He found that parents of the students in his study came into contact with each other through Korean American churches or community organizations. Over time, students who were high achieving maintained contact with these organizations and reported that the parents of their friends from the Korean community shared the same strong emphasis on academic achievement that their parents possessed. In contrast, dropouts were isolated from these organizations and the larger Korean community.

Overall, the findings of this study about social norms pertaining to education in the Asian Indian community are consistent with prior research that found that there exists in some immigrant communities *ethnic-specific social capital* which is a product of the relationships between members the community (Portes, 2003; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). In this study, part of this ethnic-specific capital was social norms that supported achievement. In addition, as in Zhou & Bankston's (1998) study, these mothers reported that groups of community members had created various academic classes for students from the community. A few mothers had previously taken advantage of these classes and a few indicated that they planned to do so in the future.

Interestingly, the finding about competitiveness in the Asian Indian community around academics and the effects of this competitiveness has not been discussed in prior research regarding the achievement of immigrant students or the research on cultural and social capital. Ironically, the *ethnic-specific capital* that produced norms conducive to achievement and classes to support children's academic progress also allowed this competitiveness to flourish.

Social Networks

In his discussion of social capital, Coleman (1988) discussed the importance of *information channels*. He noted that valuable time must be expended to acquire information, but that social networks contain the potential to gain information with minimum expenditure of time. In the case of parents and education, parents can obtain information from social networks to make decisions to support their children's educational success. More recent research (Lin, 2001) has termed this concept *social networks*.

Mothers participating in the present study highly valued education and worked hard to support their children's educational achievement. However, most of them were not educated in the U.S. and they openly expressed fears about how their lack of knowledge about the U.S. educational system might negatively impact their children. These mothers appeared to use social networks to compensate for their lack of knowledge regarding the American educational system, particularly in trying to secure information that would help their children access specialized programs like the district's academically rigorous magnet programs. The social networks on which the mothers relied largely consisted of other Asian Indian mothers. Mothers used *formal sources of information*

such as guidance counselors to gain information about their children's education. However, they engaged in *trading information* with other members of their social networks, particularly about specialized programs that could benefit their children. Mothers also reported *learning from experienced members* of their social networks, that is, attempting to gain knowledge from mothers who had previously gone through the process of applying to specialized programs. Mothers also benefitted from social networks in other ways, specifically sharing of *information about academic supplementing*. While mothers valued the information they gained from their social networks, they reported that there were *network limitations*, such as lack of knowledge and people withholding information. Some mothers compensated for this by going to people outside of their social networks, *knowledgeable outsiders*.

With regard to the use of social networks to gain information, this study found that the social networks the mothers accessed largely consisted of co-ethnics, other Asian Indian mothers. In fact, mothers reported very little social contact with the parents of their children's classmates or with the parents of their children's non-Indian friends. Mothers' use of their friendship groups to access information to support their children's educational experiences is similar to Lew's (2007) research findings regarding Korean American parents in which high achieving students reported that their parents accessed their co-ethnic networks to gain information about elite high schools and how to prepare for entrance exams to these schools. For immigrant parents, it appears that networks of co-ethnics can help them to compensate for their lack of knowledge about school systems in the destination country. Mothers' reports of constant trading of information supports Kao's (2004) contention that "...among other same-ethnic immigrants, the intensity of

the obligation and the expectations for reciprocity should be greater, given the shared experience of migration and the sentimental attachment to one's country of origin (Kao, 2004, p. 172).

The finding that competitiveness limited the usefulness of the mothers' social networks has not been discussed in other research. However, the finding that the quality of information in networks consisting solely of immigrant parents is limited is similar to Crozier & Davis (2008) findings with a sample of Bangladeshi and Pakistani parents in England. The researchers found that parents gained little knowledge about the British education system from their social networks because these networks consisted largely of other South Asian immigrants with low levels of knowledge about the British system. The finding in the present study about the limitations of the mothers' networks and how some mothers attempted to compensate for their lack of knowledge by seeking knowledgeable outsiders supports Lin's (2001) view that closed networks can be problematic and that network ties weak enough to allow members to seek outside sources of information can be beneficial.

Receiving Context

Portes (2000) argues that it is important that those who do research on the education of immigrants avoid simplistic theories about the cultural superiority and inferiority of various immigrant groups and that they pay attention to the receiving context that immigrants encounter. Portes notes that some groups face discrimination, and poor schools versus others; in particular, Asian Americans, face low levels of discrimination and a relatively positive reception.

The mothers in the study reported that they believed generally the perception of

the Asian Indian community, particularly with regard to education, was very positive.

The mothers in the interview sample, like most Asian Indian immigrants to the U.S., were highly educated, spoke English, earned good incomes and thus had access to crime-free neighborhoods with good schools in comparison to other immigrant groups (Waters, 1999).

However, a few of the mothers interviewed still reported that they, their spouses or children had encountered racism during the course of their lives in America. However, most mothers did not discuss the topic of racism with their children as they felt it would place negative ideas in their minds. Mothers also believed that regardless of discrimination, their children would be able to achieve at high levels in their academic and professional lives.

It is also possible that mothers in the present study compared the discrimination their families experienced in U.S. society and found it much easier to overcome than obstacles to success in India. This is consonant with research (e.g., Ogbu, 2003) that has argued that immigrants to the U.S. find discrimination in the U.S. easier to deal with because they find that America has more opportunities for career and social mobility than their home countries

Portes (2000) has argued that a negative reception context can reduce immigrant parents' expectations and aspirations for their children. However, this study showed that the receiving context an immigrant encounters is not static, that immigrant parents bring to the destination country ways of being and thinking about the world, a habitus in Bourdieu's words, and that this habitus can shape the way parents perceive and interact with their receiving context. In the case of this study, the mothers believed strongly in

the power of education to build a secure future for their children, a belief shaped by historical and local conditions in India and their experience of being able to immigrate to the U.S. because they possessed high levels of education. In addition they viewed the discrimination they experienced in the U.S. through the lens of their experiences in India and believed that, with education, their children would be able to achieve success in U.S. society. This habitus, along with their socioeconomic status, which provided access to good schools, likely helped them cope with the negative aspects of the receiving context

Limitations of the Current Study

This study examined the concepts of embodied cultural capital, social norms, and social networks using interviews with 12 Asian Indian mothers residing in a West Central Florida city. Participants responded to questions regarding their beliefs about education, their social networks, how they engaged in their children's education, and norms in the Asian Indian community regarding education. Several strategies were employed to increase the validity of the findings and interpretations that resulted (e.g. member checking, use of a peer debriefer). However, not all threats to the validity of the research could be controlled. Thus, several limitations to the present study must be considered when interpreting the results and making suggestions for future research.

First, due to the focus of this study (gaining an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon) there is limited generalizability of the results due to the small sample size and the geographic limitations of the sample. In addition, because participation in the study was voluntary, the sample may not represent the full diversity of the Asian Indian community in the U.S., or even in the State of Florida. In addition,

the sample came largely from urban areas in India and, as a result, not all regions of India were represented.

Data used for analysis in this study were transcriptions of interviews conducted with study participants; thus it depended on the accuracy of this transcription. To address this issue, member checking was used; participants were given the opportunity to comment on the accuracy of the transcriptions of the oral interview.

Qualitative research also depends on the researcher as instrument, that is, the researcher must not only collect data, but must analyze and interpret it, as well. Huberman & Miles (1998) point out that data analysis in qualitative research is based on the subjective interpretation of the data. In this study, having participants review preliminary analyses was used to address this issue. None of the participants reported that they disagreed with the preliminary analyses. However, giving participants the opportunity to comment on the finalized analyses would likely have increased the validity of the findings.

Another method used to lessen the impact of researcher bias and increase the validity of the findings was the use of a professional peer of the researcher, a peer debriefer. This peer debriefer was used to assist with the development of codes, with establishing interrater reliability, and with preliminary analysis.

Another limitation of the current study is social desirability, that is, in responding to interview questions, participants may have altered beliefs, opinions, and experiences in an attempt to portray themselves in a favorable light. Consistency checks, reviewing the transcripts for inconsistencies, were used to assist in assessing the veracity of subjects'

responses. This process revealed no inconsistencies in participants' responses. However, this process did not address the issue of social desirability.

Implications for Educators

The mothers interviewed in this study brought a habitus for education that included an incredibly strong emphasis on the value of education and how important it was to their children's future. They also brought with them certain beliefs about children's cognitive development and experiences with a rigorous curriculum in India that led them to supplement what their children did in school, particularly on the elementary level. Although parents lacked a high level of knowledge about the American school system, they compensated for this by relying on social networks. Parents were fortunate in that they had access to good schools and the ability to expose their children to both family and community norms that emphasized educational achievement at the highest levels. As a result, these parents are raising children who currently experience high levels of educational success and will very likely continue to do so given current data on the educational achievement of Indian American students (College Board, 2008). The families in this study are a success story in the American educational landscape, a story of which the American education system can be proud. However, it is critical that American education be proud of these success stories but also consider the more troubling educational stories of other immigrant groups in the U.S., for instance the startlingly high dropout rate for certain subgroups of Latino youth (e.g., Mexican American youth). Just as Asian Indian parents bring a habitus for education to American schools, so do other groups of immigrant parents. However, in contact with American schools, the habitus of some of these groups, by and large, consistently fails to be

translated into embodied cultural capital. While some have chosen to focus on heaping blame on these groups, with an increasingly diverse school-aged population and workforce, it is clear America will suffer if these children cannot participate in the workforce, particularly in key areas, as highly skilled members (CEOSE Report, 2000). Thus, it is time for educators to carefully consider the populations they serve and how they can leverage the beliefs, values, and attitudes they bring to support the education of their children. Important areas for educators to understand include: what parts of the world their population hails from, what their experience with schools and teachers are, what their beliefs and values about education are, their level of knowledge and understanding of the role education plays in their children's future, their understanding of what expectations schools have of them, and what actions they can take to support their children's educational success. This research and prior research (e.g., Auerbach, 2004) suggests that in working with families from immigrant backgrounds, a two-pronged approach may be necessary. As previous research has shown (e.g., Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001), it is possible for educators to change aspects of school culture so that the habitus parents bring to bear on education is respected and valued. Finally, it is also possible, if educators are willing to invest the time, to work with parents in ways (e.g., Auerbach, 2004) that respect their life experiences and beliefs and help to change their habitus for education in ways that ultimately contribute to the educational success of their children.

Implications of Results for Researchers

This study expanded both Bourdieu's and Coleman's theoretical ideas by examining how embodied cultural capital, social norms, and social networks functions among immigrant groups. With regard to Bourdieu's theory, he focused on habitus as

being shaped by class. This study points out that, like class background, other factors like ethnicity and immigration shape history and lived experience. Thus contemporary research should examine how these factors contribute to the formation of habitus.

The findings of this study have implications for our current conversations about achievement differentials. The results imply that instead of making simplistic statements about superior cultures and model minorities we need to carefully examine the varying educational experiences of members of immigrant groups. Many Asian Americans, for instance, achieve at high levels, but there are specific subgroups that experience school failure and dropout (College Board, 2008). The findings of this study suggest that the beliefs that gave an advantage to parents in their engagement in their children's education were not static but formed by the history and local conditions in their country of origin, coming to America, and their lives in America post-immigration, and the perceptions of the institutions with which they interact.

This study provides support for the notion that ethnic-specific capital exists in certain immigrant communities. However, the findings imply that this ethnic-specific capital may not necessarily play a positive role in the lives of children and, in fact, can produce social pressures like competitiveness that negatively impact children.

Theoretically, it would be fruitful for scholars to consider integrating Coleman and Bourdieu's theoretical concepts. Thus far, research on these theories has been pursued separately. But in the case of education, it would be helpful to consider integrating these concepts as this study and others show that concepts from both theoretical perspectives are useful constructs for understanding the engagement of parents in their children's education. If parents' habitus shapes their engagement in their

children's education, it can also be said to influence norms about education that exist in communities, as norms arise from groups of individuals holding similar beliefs. Parents' habitus also influences whether and how they access social networks to engage in their children's education.

This study and other theoretical work (e.g., Portes, 2003) shows that when studying the educational experiences of immigrant families in destination countries we must broaden our lens. This study and prior research points the way to the beginning outlines of a theory that may help to explain the education of immigrant students. Considering the results of this study and prior research (e.g., Bankston & Zhou, 1998; Bhattacharya & Schopely, 2004; Lew, 2007) it appears that immigrant families come from their countries of origin with a habitus for education and an approach to schooling that is shaped by the histories and local conditions in their countries of origin. This habitus shapes family-level norms about education and ultimately community-level norms and parents' approaches to using, or not using, social networks to engage in their children's education.

How they come to their destination countries and their reception in those countries further influences immigrants' habitus for schooling. Since norms arise from the beliefs and the relationships between of a group of individuals in the destination country, the role social norms will play in children's education is influenced by the ability of the immigrant community to congregate as a cohesive community. The ability to be a cohesive community also influences parents' ability to use social networks to engage in their children's education. Finally, the values of the educational institutions with which immigrant parents interact need to be considered because whether the habitus

that immigrant families bring with them is translated into embodied cultural capital depends on the values and perceptions of these institutions.

Suggestions for Future Research

As Bourdieu pointed out, parents' habitus becomes embodied cultural capital only when institutions value this habitus. Thus far, research, including this study, has not examined the perspective of schools. It is time to critically examine what schools value about parent beliefs, values, and actions. A number of researchers (e.g., Lareau, 2003; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001) have pointed out that schools privilege some modes of interaction relative to others. But very little research has examined how schools interact with immigrant families. Future research needs to examine how the habitus of some parents functions as embodied cultural capital in interaction with schools while the habitus of other parents is devalued by schools. This research should take an ethnographic approach, focusing on particular immigrant communities, examining the experiences of particular families relative to schooling, but also examining the perspectives of the schools that serve them, and the community institutions and networks that relate to schooling.

Coleman's ideas about social norms and social networks are a valuable way of understanding parents' engagement in their children education. Future research should focus on understanding these concepts better. Large quantitative studies have been advantageous in that they have found support for the effect of social norms on achievement. However, educational researchers have failed to truly illuminate the nature of the concepts of social norms and networks and how they work in practice. Our current understandings of these concepts do not lend themselves well to operationalization using

data from large-scale quantitative studies like the National Educational Longitudinal Studies. Future studies should include multi-method designs to allow researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of these concepts.

Future research should include more qualitative research on immigrant groups and education. We are faced with school populations that are increasingly diverse and a globalized world that portends more large scale movements of populations; thus we need to broaden the groups we study to examine the experiences of the multitude of groups that comprise contemporary America. Moreover, we need to test theories that can help us better understand the achievement differentials between the various groups in our schools.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Study Description for Association Members/Community Members

A graduate student at the University of South Florida is conducting a study of Asian Indian parents' involvement in their children's education. She's looking for Asian Indian families who have lived in the U.S. for at least 2 years, are permanent residents or U.S. citizens, and are willing to meet with her on two separate occasions. The first meeting would last for approximately 90 minutes. The second meeting would last for approximately 45 minutes. She's interested in talking with you about your beliefs about education, and things you do to support your child's education.

Appendix B: Study Cover Letter

You are receiving this letter because you expressed interest in participating in a study of Asian Indian families' engagement in their children's schooling. The purpose of this letter is to ask for your participation in the study, "Asian Indian Parents Involvement in their Children's Schooling: An Analysis of Social and Cultural Capital. Susan Forde, a school psychology doctoral student at the University of South Florida and primary investigator of this study is conducting this study to examine the beliefs and experiences of Asian Indian parents with regard to their children's education.

You are being asked to participate in a 90-minute in person audio recorded interview about your engagement in your children's schooling and your beliefs about education. In addition, a follow-up interview (which can be conducted by telephone) that is approximately 45 minutes will be conducted to give you a chance to verify the transcript of your interview and the conclusions that the researcher draws based on your interview. The enclosed consent form gives more details about the study.

For your convenience, I have provided you with a postage-paid envelope to use in returning the consent form and demographic questionnaire to me. If you are interested in participating, please:

1. Fill out the attached Brief Demographic Questionnaire
2. Complete and sign the enclosed consent form
3. Return these materials to me by _____

Your participation in this study is crucial to the success of this study. By participating in the study, you will assist the investigator understanding the experiences of Asian Indian families in the U.S. with regard to education. This information will improve educators' understanding of the experience of Asian Indian families with regard to engaging in their children's education.

Please mail these materials in the pre-addressed, postage paid envelope to the following address:

Mailing Address
Susan Forde, M.S.
4302 Gunn Highway, Apt. 907
Tampa, FL 33618

Your privacy and research records will be kept confidential to the extent of the law. Authorized research personnel, employees of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the USF Institutional Review Board, staff and other individuals acting on behalf of USF may inspect the records from this research project. The results of the study may be published. However, the data obtained from you will be combined with data from

Appendix B (Continued)

others. The published results will not include your name or any other information that would personally identify you in any way.

Your input is very important and I thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this pilot study. If you have questions about your rights as a person who is taking part in a pilot study, call USF Division of Research Compliance and Integrity at (813) 974-9343.

If you have any questions about this research study, contact Susan Forde, M.S. at 646-734-8229 or at forde@coedu.usf.edu.

Thank you for your time.

Susan Forde

Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

1. How many years have you lived in the U.S.? _____
3. What is your status in the U.S. (*Circle one*)
U.S. Citizen Permanent Resident Other
4. Number of children (ages 1 – 17) residing in your household who attend public school: (*Circle one*)
1 2 3 4 5 More than 5 (specify number) _____
5. Age and Grade of each child

Child 1

Age: _____ Grade in school: _____

Child 2

Age: _____ Grade in school: _____

Child 3

Age: _____ Grade in school: _____

Child 4

Age: _____ Grade in school: _____

Child 5

Age: _____ Grade in school: _____

NOTE: PLEASE USE BACK OF PAGE IF MORE THAN 5 CHILDREN

**Informed Consent to Participate in Research
Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study**

IRB Study #

Researchers at the University of South Florida (USF) study many topics. To do this, we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. This form tells you about this research study.

We are asking you to take part in a research study that is called:

Asian Indian Parents Involvement in their Children's Schooling: An Analysis of Social and Cultural Capital

The person who is in charge of this research study is Susan Forde. This person is called the Principal Investigator.

The research will be done through interviews with you in your home or at a public place that is convenient for you (e.g., coffee shop).

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to

Ms. Susan Forde, a graduate student in the College of Education at the University of South Florida is doing a study to examine the role Asian Indian parents residing in the U.S. play in their children's education. The researcher is interested in Indian parents' beliefs about education and how they engage in their children's schooling process. This study is being conducted for a dissertation. You are being asked to participate because you are from India and have children enrolled in a grade between Kindergarten and 12th grade in U.S. schools.

Study Procedures

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to: (1) Fill out the attached demographic questionnaire. The estimated time for completion is 5 minutes. (2) Answer questions in an interview with the researcher about your role in your child's schooling and your beliefs about

Appendix D (Continued)

education. This interview will last approximately 90 minutes. At the end of this interview, you will be asked to fill out a background information form. The estimated time for completion is 15 minutes. The interview will take place in your home or in a convenient public place (e.g., coffee shop). (3) You will be asked to undergo a follow-up interview to review transcripts of your earlier interview and the conclusions drawn by the researcher. This follow-up interview is voluntary and will last for approximately 45 minutes. It can be conducted by telephone, in your home, or in a convenient public place; it is your choice. It is estimated that the total time required for you to participate in this study is 2.5 hours. The first interview will be audio recorded. Only the researcher will have access to the recording of your interview. Tapes will be labeled using the pseudonym (false names). Your name will not be included on them anywhere. Tapes of the interviews notes will be kept for 5 years and then destroyed by erasing them.

Alternatives

You have the alternative to choose not to participate in this research study.

Benefits

The potential benefit to you is the chance to increase knowledge researchers have about Indian parents' role in their children's education.

Risks or Discomfort

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

Compensation

We will not pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

Confidentiality

We must keep your study records confidential. Your interviews will be tape recorded and then transcribed. The researcher will also take notes during the interviews and those notes will be typed up. To ensure your confidentiality, you will be assigned a pseudonym (false name). Only the researcher will have access to the list of family names and pseudonyms. She will keep this list in a locked file drawer in her home. The tape recordings of the interviews and informed consent documents will also be stored in this file drawer. Tapes will be labeled using the pseudonyms. Your name will not be included on them anywhere. The pseudonyms also will be used on the transcriptions of the interviews. Your name will not be used in reporting the results of the study. Transcripts of interviews with participants will be stored in password protected files on the researcher's computer. Tapes of the interviews, transcriptions, and notes will be kept for 5 years and then destroyed.

Appendix D (Continued)

Interview transcripts and notes shared with others will not contain your real names. However, certain people may need to see your study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator, the researcher's advisor, and a researcher who will review transcripts of interviews
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety.) These include:
 - The University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the staff that work for the IRB. Other individuals who work for USF that provide other kinds of oversight may also need to look at your records.
 - The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not let anyone know your name. We will not publish anything else that would let people know who you are.

Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study, to please the investigator or the research staff. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study.

Questions, concerns, or complaints

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, call Susan Forde at 646-734-8229.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, general questions, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the Division of Research Integrity and Compliance of the University of South Florida at (813) 974-9343.

If you experience an unanticipated problem related to the research call Susan Forde at 646-734-8229.

Appendix D (Continued)

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

Date

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect.

I hereby certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he or she understands:

- What the study is about.
- What procedures/interventions/investigational drugs or devices will be used.
- What the potential benefits might be.
- What the known risks might be.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Topic Domain 1: Embodied Cultural Capital

I'm interested in your beliefs about education and the role you as a parent play in your child's schooling. If your experiences differ significantly for any one of your children, please let me know. Share with me your beliefs about the importance of education for your children.

1. How would you rank the importance of education in comparison to other aspects of your children's lives? (e.g., sports, art, music, play, other after-school activities). Why is this is so?
 - a. How similar do you believe is your view of the importance of education in your children's lives as compared to the view that is commonly held in American society?
 - b. In what ways, if any, are you influenced by what you perceive to be the dominant view in the U.S. about education and schooling for your child/children?
2. Where or from what sources do you derive your beliefs about education (e.g., religion, your parents, etc.)?
3. How do you communicate to your child expectations about his/her education?
 - a. What role does education play in your child's/children's future?
4. Are there certain norms or expectations in the Asian Indian community about education and the role parents should play in their child's education?
 - a. What might some of these be?
 - b. To what extent does this play a role in what you communicate to your child/children about your expectations for his/her education and his/her performance in school?
5. From what other sources (e.g., religious teachings, family members) do you believe your child/children receive messages about the role of education in their lives?
6. To what extent does the fact that you are an immigrant to the United States of America play a role in what you tell your kids about education?
 - a. To what extent does your own experience growing up in another country influence what you believe and tell your child/children about education?
 - b. Does your ethnicity influence what you tell them about education?
7. How important do you think it is that your child/children share your beliefs about education?
8. What do you do to ensure that your child/children acquire these beliefs?
9. Overall, what do you think the role of parents should be in their children's education?

Appendix E (Continued)

10. To what extent are your beliefs about your child's education and schooling consistent with what is valued by his or her school? (as reflected in school's policies and practices)
11. To what extent are you involved with any particular type of school activities (e.g., *PTA, fundraising, volunteering in classroom, and any other school activities*)?
 - a. Frequency
 - b. Duration
12. In general, how important do you think it is for parents to be involved in these activities?
 - a. Why?
13. What kinds of resources outside of school do you utilize to help your child with school (*tutors, enriching activities, provision of study materials*).
14. What types of issues do you typically talk about with your child's teachers or other school officials?
 - a. Academic issues? Behavior issues?
15. How easy or difficult has it been for you to communicate or interact with school officials/teachers? Are there particular factors that help or hinder you from communicating with teachers or school officials?
16. What challenges, if any, have you experienced in your attempts to be involved in your child's schooling (e.g., *work schedule, family commitments, scheduling of school meetings, activities, and events*)?
17. From your perspective, what are some important things you believe it is your responsibility to teach your child? (e.g., *how to speak home language fluently*?)
18. What do you see as the school's responsibility to teach your child/children?

Topic Domain 2: Social Norms

I'd like to learn a bit more about your child's/children's in-school and out-of school activities as well as their friendship groups. If your experiences differ significantly for any one of your children, please let me know.

1. In a typical week, what kinds of things do you do to assist your child/children with school or their school work?
2. How often do you engage in conversation with your child/children about school, school work or their performance in school?
 - a. What kinds of topics do you talk about in these conversations?

Appendix E (Continued)

3. What kinds of rules or expectations does your family have for your child's/children schoolwork?
 - a. Homework
 - b. Grades
 - c. Time spent on academics
4. In what type of out-of-school activities do your child/children typically engage? With whom do they typically engage for these after-school activities?
 - a. Friends at school? In the neighborhood?
 - b. How important are these activities and the friends with whom they engage in such activities to you and your child/children?
5. To what extent have you tried to ensure that the activities in which your child/children participate outside of school are with children whose parents you know?
 - a. Do these children usually tend to come from the Asian Indian community?
 - b. How important is it that your child/children socialize with other Asian Indian children?
6. Do you encourage your child/children to participate in cultural activities in the Asian Indian community? What type of activities (could you provide me a few examples)?
 - a. How important are these activities to you? How do you see them helping your child/children?
7. Are there any other activities in which your children regularly engage? Cultural, academic, or otherwise?
 - a. When they participate in these activities, who are the children that they are most often with? (e.g., children whose parents you know well, other children in the Asian Indian community, children from their schools)
 - b. How does their participation in these activities relate to their education?
8. Do you tend to socialize with the parents of your child's/children's friends?
 - a. Can you give me a few examples of the kinds of things that you do?
9. How important do you believe it is to know the families of your child's/children's friends well?
10. How important do you believe it is to have a say in your child's/children's choice of friends?
11. How important is it to you that your child/children have friends from the Asian Indian community?
 - a. Anything else that you feel that is important for your child's/children's friends?
 - b. What has influenced your beliefs on this issue?
12. Earlier, you described the priority you placed on education. To what extent would you say that the parents of your child's/children's closest friends share this value orientation?

Appendix E (Continued)

13. Overall, when you think about life in America and American schools, is there anything that you, as a parent, do differently, than you would in India, in regard to engaging with your child/children's education?

Topic Domain 3: Social Networks

I'm interested in learning about your friendship groups. How would you describe the individuals who are among your closest friends? Or with whom you most often socialize? Are they your:

- a. Neighbors?
- b. Parents of your children's classmates?
- c. People from cultural associations to which you belong?
- d. Primarily made up of other Asian Indian families?
2. How well do you know the parents of the children who attend your child's school?
 - c. How many of them do you know (e.g., one other parent, a few parents, etc.)
 - d. How often do you interact with them?
 - e. What kinds of conversations do you have with them?
3. Share with me some of the most common issues or questions related to your child's/children's education and/or schooling about which you would seek information?
4. When you want to find out information about any issue or topic related to your child's/children's education or schooling, what would you say are the primary sources of information that you use?
 - a. Internet
 - b. Other parents
 - c. Teachers
5. When you speak to other parents for information, who do you tend to talk to:
 - a. Parents from social or cultural groups to which you belong
 - b. Family members
 - c. Parents at your child's school
 - d. Parents in clubs/organizations in which your child/children participate
6. How would you describe the importance of the information that you receive from other parents in helping you make educational decisions for your child/children or understand the schooling process?
7. How would you describe the importance of the information that you receive from other parents in making educational decisions?
 - f. In understanding the schooling process?

Appendix F: Background Information Form

Participant Number: _____ (Provided by Researcher)

Last Name: _____ **First Name:** _____

Primary Occupation: _____ **Secondary Occupation:** _____

Annual Household Income before taxes: *(Check one)*

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Below \$15, 000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$15, 000-\$24, 999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25, 000-\$34, 999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35, 000-\$44, 999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$45, 000-\$54, 999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$55, 000-\$64, 999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$65, 000 -\$74, 999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$75, 000-\$84, 999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$85, 000-\$94, 999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$95, 000- \$104, 999 | <input type="checkbox"/> Above 105, 000 | |

Highest Education Level Completed: *(Circle one)*

Country Where Completed

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1 No formal schooling | _____ |
| 2 Elementary | _____ |
| 3 Junior Secondary | _____ |
| 4 High School | _____ |
| 5 Post-secondary-non degree
(e.g., technical college) | _____ |
| 6 Some college | _____ |
| 7 Associate degree | _____ |
| 8 Bachelor's degree | _____ |
| 9 Master's degree | _____ |
| 10 Professional degree (e.g., M.D.,L.L.B) | _____ |
| 11 Doctoral degree (e.g., Ph.D., Ed.D.) | _____ |

How long did you live in your country of origin before immigrating to reside permanently in the U.S.? _____

Marital status: *(Circle one)*

- 1 Never married
- 2 Married
- 3 Separated
- 4 Divorced
- 5 Widow/Widower

Appendix F (Continued)

Number of adults (18 years or older) residing in your household: _____

Number of children (ages 1 – 17) residing in your household: *(Circle one)*

1 2 3 4 5 More than 5 (specify number) _____

Child 1 Biological Adopted Other

Age: _____

Birth date: _____

Grade in school: _____

Grades on last report card:

Subject	Grade

Child 2 Biological Adopted Other

Age: _____

Birth date: _____

Grade in school: _____

Subject	Grade

Appendix F (Continued)

Child 3 Biological Adopted Other

Age: _____

Birth date: _____

Grade in school: _____

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Grade</u>

Child 4 Biological Adopted Other

Age: _____

Birth date: _____

Grade in school: _____

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Grade</u>

Appendix G: Codebook

1.0 Connections/contact to home country & U.S.

- 1.1 family
- 1.2. Visits, telephone contact to home country
- 1.3 Relationship to U.S. (length of time in US, etc.)
 - 1.3.1 Reference to U.S. as home, not home
- 1.4 Future plans (residence, retirement)
- 1.5 Views of U.S./life in U.S., comparisons to India, etc.

2.0 Connections with Community (in U.S.) with region/country community

- 2.1 Associations
- 2.2 special events (festival, gala, religious events, dance performance, Vidyalaya, temple)
- 2.3 Social gatherings with other Indian families

3.0 Indian Community Norms re: Education/Achievement

- 3.1 Parents' relationships with parents of children's friends
- 3.2 Information ab. Children's social networks (adults & children) & values of this network
- 3.3 AI community expectations about grades, achievement, competitiveness in community
- 3.4 Parents' beliefs/choices re: composition of children's social circles
- 3.5 Children's participation in cultural activities in community
- 3.6. Norms of AI community about parents' role in education parent's duties, community norms ab. parent role, mother's role

4.0 Perceptions of American public schools

- 4.1 Perceptions-Teachers, administration (includes comparisons to India)
- 4.2 Perceptions-Curriculum (includes comparisons to India)

Appendix G (continued)

5.0 Parent Beliefs Connected to Education

- 5.1 Beliefs about the value/importance of education
- 5.2 Origins of beliefs about education (where did they get them)
 - 5.2.1 Their parents
 - 5.2.2 Indian culture, system, society (e.g., colonialism, overpopulation explanations)
 - 5.2.3 Their friends
- 5.3 Beliefs about their role in their children's education,
- 5.4 Race/ethnicity, emigration, and education
- 5.5 Beliefs about extra work (e.g., in summer, flexibility of brain when children are young, supplementing acad. work)
- 5.6 Beliefs about maintaining connections to culture, knowledge of culture, specific cultural values, home language, etc.
- 5.7 Differences between Indian and Am. Community beliefs about education (e.g. how important extracurricular activities are)
- 5.8 Role of extracurricular activities in education
- 5.9 Family (parents, grandparents, etc.) rules/expectations, beliefs about grades, achievement
- 5.10 Beliefs about schools responsibility to teach children
- 5.11 Values that are important to them in raising their children

6.0 Parent Involvement

- 6.1 PI-Communication with schools (other than open houses--phone calls, email, etc.), home school relationship, progress monitoring
- 6.2 PI-Formal channels (PTA, volunteering, open houses etc.)
- 6.3 PI-Home (help w/ homework, projects, monitoring homework completion)
- 6.4 PI-Applying to special programs (e.g., middle & HS magnets, gifted programs)
- 6.5 PI-Outside resources other than parent help (e.g., Kumon, classes at temple)
- 6.6 PI-Working on basic academic skills before child begins school
- 6.7 PI-Supplementing with parent-assigned work, academic work in summers,
- 6.8 Parents (or other family members) discussing with children school and education related topics
- 6.9 Finding other learning opportunities (e.g., volunteering at a lab) Extracurricular opportunities

Appendix G (continued)

7.0 Perceptions of Community

7.1 Perceptions of Indian community

7.2 Teacher expectations of Indian children

8.0 Social Networks

8.1 Communication with parents from kids' schools (generally & regarding education)

8.2 Communication with parents of children's friends (generally & re: educ.)

8.3 Parents' friendship network characteristics

8.4 Other sources of information about education (e.g., Internet, teachers)

8.5 Children's activities

8.6 communication with friends/social network re: education

9.0 Challenges Encountered with Parent Involvement

9.1 Difficulties with school personnel

9.2 Navigating the school system (policies, processes, lack of familiarity)

9.3 Cultural differences, bias, language issues

9.4 Time, logistics (e.g., transportation)

About the Author

Susan Chanderbhan-Forde received her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology from York University in Toronto, Canada in 2000 and her Masters in Educational Psychology from Indiana University–Bloomington in 2002. After completing her Master’s degree, she worked in non profit and higher education settings in New York City. She entered the Ph.D. program in School Psychology in 2005. While enrolled in the University of South Florida School Psychology Program, she specialized in mental health and education with an international focus. During her time at the University of South Florida, Susan also developed an interest in program evaluation, (in particular in the use of qualitative methods in program evaluation), response to intervention, and the education of immigrant students. Susan completed an APA-approved internship in the Dallas Independent School District.